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**Editor: A.C. SUKLA**

B-8, Sambalpur University, Jyoti Vihar, Orissa.  
India - 768019. Phone: +0663+2430314, Fax :0663+2431915  
E.mail: anantasukla@hotmail.com

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**Professor - S. S. Mishra**

1934-2000

# **JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND AESTHETICS**

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**Volume: XXVI: Nos. 1-2: 2003**

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In the memory of Late Professor Satyaswarupa Mishra  
Benaras Hindu University  
Founder Member, Editorial Board, JCLA.

**A VISHVANATHA KAVIRAJA INSTITUTE PUBLICATION**



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# A Castle of Sand: The Theme of Incest in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *The Alexandria Quartet*

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ZIA HASAN

Ambivalence, not unvacillating courage and censure, has typically characterized human responses to the idea and practice of incest. The incestuous union ordinarily both attracts and repels. At various places and times and in countless individual cases, the element of attraction has been the stronger; more often however incestuous relationships have been viewed mainly with disapproval, even horror. Sociologist S. Kirson Weinberg writes: "Incest, the universal crime, violates a taboo that is forceful among primitives as among sophisticated moderns. It is behavior that disrupts or destroys the social intimacy..... it is the recourse of very disturbed and very perverse persons."<sup>1</sup> Philosopher and jurist Rene Guyon takes a quite different view: "And indeed, when we arrive at the stage of social development at which taboos are asked to show their *raison d'être*, we soon discover that in this particular matter of incest at any rate, no solid grounds at all can be produced. There are no logical or physiological arguments of any kind available."<sup>2</sup> These are both extremist opinions; a more moderate position is valid in most cases of incest.

Whatever may be said for the necessity of the incest prohibition it claims a high toll—and self punishment is always inflicted. Masters, in outlining the pattern of self-punishment, explains that it usually takes the form of a severe depression, leading to suicide, a self destructive accident or crime of violence not consciously related to the incident, or an abrupt plunge into psychosis.<sup>3</sup> The process of self punishment is a gradual one, the neurosis building somewhat as a snowball, around the traumatic centre, as the individual collects additional experiences with which, because of the initial wound and perhaps for other reasons he is unable adequately to deal. Masters goes on to stress that the damage resulting from a violation of the incest prohibition is not the direct and inevitable consequence of the act in the same sense that a burn is the direct and inevitable consequence of thrusting one's bare fingers into the flames.<sup>4</sup> There is nothing essentially harmful about sexual intercourse with a close relation. The behavior is damaging, partly or entirely, because it is so strongly prohibited. The forbidden act has been physically charged with a kind of toxic force that strikes at the psyche of the violator.

It is surprising to note the parallel in the pattern of the brother-sister relationship, between John Ford's Anabella and Giovanni, in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, and Lawrence Durrell's Liza and Pursewarden in *The Alexandria Quartet*. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* was published in 1633. *The Alexandria Quartet* just about three hundred and twenty five years later. Both of these relationships can be singled out from the basic brother-sister incest

pattern. In both relationships, the lovers love each other with an intensity which is more than purely physical—combining in fact the traditions of the Petragian and the Byronic. Essentially both pairs of lovers create their own small worlds, a microcosm around their relationship. The resulting conflict between these microcosms and the greater world of reality around it, generates in tragedy for the lovers, for the outlook of our society hasn't changed much in four centuries. Liza and Pursewarden and their bondage, just like Anabella and Giovanni's are swept away like flotsam in a rough sea. Their microcosm, the "castle of sand" is destroyed, today, just like it has leveled, three hundred years ago.

Liza and Pursewarden had grown up in the intimacy and happiness possible only in childhood. They were orphans with "no resources except in each other. He converted my blindness into poetry—I saw with his brain, he with my eyes."<sup>5</sup> This interdependence and isolation from social contact made them build a world of fantasy of their own, a microcosm with its own layer of reality. Liza herself describes this world: "Everything else was invented. This was how I became the strange mythological queen of his life, living in a vast palace of sighs, as he used to say. Sometimes it was Egypt, sometimes Peru, sometimes Byzantium."<sup>5</sup> (c: 190)

Pursewarden attempts to justify his relationship with Liza by seeing in her, a beauty equaling the god's: "...he saw....the white marble face with its curling black hair thrown back about the nape of a slender neck, the ear-points, chin cleft by a dimple." (M.O.175) And his reasoning challenges our credibility: "Later, when he started looking for justification for our love instead of just being simply proud of it, he read me a quotation from a book. In the African burial rites it is the sister who brings the dead king back to life. In Egypt as well as in Peru the king who was considered a god took his sister to wife. But the motive was ritual and not sexual, for they symbolized the moon and the sun in their conjugation. The king marries his sister because he, as god the star, wandering on earth, is immortal and may therefore not propagate himself in the children of a strange woman, anymore than he is allowed to die a natural death." (c:191) Pursewarden, thus lays the foundations of his microcosm with its own moral and social codes.

Giovanni, in the initial scene of *'Tis Pity she's a Whore*, also sees in Anabella a beauty as heavenly and his plea to the confessor—friar, is an attempt at justifying his feeling for Anabella:

Must I not Praise  
The beauty which, if fram'd anew, the gods  
Would make a god of, if they had it there,  
And kneel to it, as I do kneel to them?<sup>7</sup>

When the friar reprimands him, Giovanni creates his own logic to explain his love for Anabella:

Shall a peevish sound,  
A customary form, from man to man  
Of brother and a sister, be a bar  
Twist by perpetual happiness and me?

Say that we had one father, say one womb  
(Curse to my joys) gave both us life and birth;  
Are we not therefore each to the other bound  
So much the more by nature, by the links  
Of blood, of reason—nay if you will haven't  
Even of religion—to be ever once,  
One soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all.

(T.P.S.W., A:I S:I)

In both the attempts at justification, Pursewarden and Giovanni follow their own systems of logic. The logic may seem flawed and impetuous but this is explained by the intensity of passion exhibited by both of them, an intensity which defies reason. Pursewarden, unable to justify his relationship with Liza, digs into the past to create a microcosm, his own web of reality to which he tries to adhere even to the very end when he commits suicide to avoid dying "a natural death." Giovanni, on the other hand is so desperate that he exaggerates, distorts and establishes his own standards of morality. He also visualizes his relationship with Anabella as a separate entity, a microcosm, a small world of their own, in which ecstasy abounds:

... O the glory  
Of two united hearts like hers and mine!  
Let poring book-men dream of other worlds,  
My world, and all of happiness is here,  
And I'd not change it for the best to come. . .

(T.P.S.W. A:V S:II)

These attempts at creating a microcosm with its own version of reality leads only to self delusion. The stark nakedness of reality in our world hardly permits the building of sand castles.

John Wergel in talking about the love of Liza and Pursewarden concludes that the "incest becomes the dramatization of a complete self-renunciation. It is at once the most decadent as well as the most exalted behavior know to civilization."<sup>8</sup>

But whatever might have been Pursewarden's motivation, the feeling of guilt eventually descends on h. And even though "incest is ...very poetical circumstance" the charm soon fades as Liza herself admits :

But when the guilt entered, the old poetic life began to lose its magic...It is as he who made me dye my hair black, so I could pretend to be a step-sister of his, not sister. It hurt me deeply to realize that he was guilty all of a sudden; but as we grew up the world intruded more and more upon us, new lives began to impinge on our solitary world of palaces and kingdoms. He was forced to go away for long periods (C:p.191).



But all this feeling of guilt, the attempt to justify the relationship by illusion, and the feeble endeavor to free himself from the bonds of incest in unsuccessful. Pursewarden becomes trapped forever, physically and mentally in the maze of his own web—Liza becomes his check. Likewise, Giovanni, sensing the approach of overwhelming guilt attempts to break his relationship with Anabella. But he, too, is deeply enmeshed in his microcosm; as such his efforts are futile, as he himself realizes:

I have...wearied Heaven with prayers, dried up  
The spring of my continual tears, even starv'd  
My veins with daily fasts: what wit or art  
Could counsel, I have practic'd; but alas,  
I find all these but dreams....I'm still the same

(T.P.S.W. (Act I, S.III)

The love of Liza and Pursewarden in productive. A girl was born to them—a girl with “those troubling lines of mouth and nose as the features of Pursewarden himself.” The birth of the girl was the high point of their love, and the shock of her loss is evident from Liza’s reaction when Darley brings up the subject:

‘Do you see her?’ said Liza in a thrilling whisper  
that shook the nerves by its strange tension, its mixture  
of savagery, bitterness and triumphant anguish. ‘Do you  
see her? She was our child. It was when she died that  
he was overcome with remorse for a situation which had  
brought nothing but joy before. Her death suddenly made  
him guilty. Our relationship foundered there; and yet  
it became in another way intense, closer. We were until  
by our guilt from that moment. I have often asked myself  
why should it be so. Tremendous unbroken happiness and  
then one day like an iron shutter, falling guilt.’ (C:p. 174)

Pursewarden himself has written: “At first we seek to supplement the emptiness of our individuality through love, and for a brief moment enjoy the illusion of completeness” (B.234). The “illusion of completeness” crumbles when their daughter dies and guilt sets in like a toxic force at the heart of the violator.<sup>9</sup> Durrell suggests in the preparatory not of *Balthazar* that his series is “our investigation of modern love.” Bonamy Dobree questions this statement and suggests that the loves portrayed are as old “as Alexandria itself.”<sup>10</sup>

Certainly the fruit of the union of Anabella and Giovanni brings similar turmoil into their lives. The “iron shutter” of guilt descends on Anabella and she asks the friar: “Is there no way left to redeem my miseries?” (T.P.S.W. Act III S. VI). The unborn child, the result of the union which brought them ecstasy, becomes a thorn in their lives. Anabella is married off to preserve her honour, but she cannot leave behind her burden of guilt nor escape the bond of incestuous love. Her love for Giovanni becomes her “check”—a barrier which prevents her from transcending the limits of incestuous love, for the love of her husband Soranzo. For

Pursewarden, his overpowering love for Liza is also his “check.” He had married to escape from this “check”—but it only strengthened his feeling for Liza. Pursewarden in *Balthazar* is reported to have said: “...they [men] intrude on each other’s lives trying to express themselves through each other...I think that sex is a physic not a physical act.” (B:p.124) But Pursewarden, because of the “check” is also an incomplete man in his relationship with women. His definition of sex seems to apply only to his relationship with Liza. For outside this microcosm he is unable to make love to Melissa. Melissa, lying on the bed, is metamorphosed to Liza “the white marble face with its curling black hair.” Even the urgency of the sexual drive cannot break the barrier, the “check” ; its dominance is total.

For Giovanni and Anabella, the lingering love for each other also becomes a “check” for all purposes. Even after Anabella is married, he expects their relationship to remain the same. And he remains completely unaffected by other women. Finally his persistence leads to everyone’s doom. For Anabella, the “check” is even greater. She cannot love Soranzo—does not pretend to—and her marriage of convenience does not flower into love. When Soranzo comes to know of her pregnancy he confronts her in a fit of anger:

Saranzo : Whore of whores!

Dost thou tell me this?

Anabella : O yes, why not...’twas not for love I chose you,  
But for honor.

Soranzo : Excellent queen ! Why art thou not with child ?

Anabella : What needs all this when ’tis superfluous I confess I am.

(T.P.S.W. Act IV S.III)

Anabella’s “check” not only stops her from loving her husband, it infuses her with a pride which acts as a deterrent to her relationship with Soranzo. Even though she says to Soranzo “I would see whether I could love you,” we know that she never can.

Pursewarden admits that “we shall never be able to love another person.” In the strictest platonic sense he never really does love anybody else. But finally Pursewarden realizes that Liza is no longer “the strange mythological queen of his life.” She has fallen in love with David Mountolive; his web of fantasy slowly disintegrates. In a senses he is relieved, for he realizes that at least Liza has managed to overcome the check. In answer to Liza’s letter (informing him of her love for Mountolive). Pursewarden expresses a feeling of joy which is double edged:

...And today it came! This long-awaited message...such joy as I never hoped to experience in my life—to think of you suddenly plunging into the full richness of life

at last, no longer tied, manacled to the image of your tormented brother!...But then gradually as the cloud lifted and dispersed I felt the leaden tug of another truth, quite unforeseen quite unexpected. The fear that, so long as I was still alive, still somewhere existing in the world you would find it impossible truly to escape from the chains in which I have so cruelly held you all these years...I

must really abandon you, really remove myself from the scene in a manner which would permit no further equivocation in our vacillating hearts. I had anticipated the joy, but not that it would bring with it such a clear representation of certain death. This was huge novelty ! Yet it is the completes gift I can offer you as a wedding present ! And if you look beyond the immediate pain you see how perfect the logic of love seems to one who is ready to die for it. (Clea : p.171)

Beneath the façade of expressing joy for his sister, Pursewarden in a capsule traces the dilemma in their relationship. He realizes that nothing can be the same again and that bereft of Liza, life is not worth living. So, in a sense, he must die. But true till the end to his own illusion of reality he dies an unnatural death—he commits suicide.<sup>11</sup> And the message he smears on the mirror with a shaving soap is in a limited sense applicable to his life:

Oh Dreadful is the check !  
Intense the agony  
When the ear begins to hear  
And the eye begins to see (MO: p.175)

For Giovanni, Pursewarden's message is also readily applicable. He, unable to stay away from Anabella, and unable to bear her cohabitation with Soranzo, kills her. His way out is basically much cruder than Pursewarden's, but his feelings bear the same intensity and strength of purpose: "I have....kill'd a love, for whose each drop of blood/I would have pawned my heart." (T.P.S.W. Act V.S. VI) And having served his purpose in life, he awaits death with an eagerness quite like Pursewarden's: "Death, thou art a quest long look'd for; I embrace/Thee and thy wounds..." (T.P.S.W. Act V.S. VI). Though Giovanni's death is more theatrical than Pursewarden's, they both welcome death because it promises a release from the "check" which has been an impossible burden to live with. For in the final analysis both the relationships between Liza and Pursewarden and Anabella and Giovanni bears similar patterns.

Though Durrell offers alternative motivations for Pursewarden's suicide, his rejection by Liza is the most plausible reason. In creating a microcosm centering around his relationship with Liza, Pursewarden had overlooked the limitations of such a world. When Liza, like Anabella, outgrows the microcosm and has to leave it, the very foundation crumbles. Moreover, incest between a brother and a sister was a taboo in the seventeenth century and is still a taboo today, and the impact on the individual mind stemming from centuries of belief in this taboo is overwhelming. Liza and Pursewarden and their parallels from the past, Giovanni and Anabella, manage to survive for a fragmentary moment in time due to the intensity of their love. But eventually the microcosm founded on their dreams of happiness, are swept away like a castle of sand, into oblivion.

## Endnotes

1. Kirson Weinberg, *Incest Behavior* (New York: Citadel Press, 1955).
2. Rene Guyon, *The Ethics of Sexual Acts* (New York: Knopf, 1934).
3. R.L. Masters, *Patterns of Incest* (New York: The Julian Press, 1963), p.51-61.
4. Ibid., p.51-61.
5. Durrell, *Clea* (New York: E.F. Dutton & Co., 1961), p.1961. Subsequent references to any book of *The Alexandria Quartet*, will be inserted in the text.
6. Masters points out that in Egypt and Peru the practice of incest prevailed among the ruling class. One of the reasons cited for this practice is the preservation of the purity of the royal blood. Though the Romans prohibited incest, the prohibition was not strictly enforced. For instance, Nero, is reported to have an incestuous relationship with his mother, Agrippina. Masters, p.18-26.
7. John Ford, *'Tis Pity she's Whore*, ed. N.W. Bawcutt (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p.5. Subsequent references will be inserted in the text.
8. John Wergel, *Lawrence Durrell* (New York: E.F. Dutton & Co.1965), p.100.
9. In the introduction to *Violation of Taboo*, a collection of fictive works dealing with incest, Cory and Masters discuss the effect of guilt on the human mind and point out "incestuous cravings give rise to maiming guilt." *Violation of Taboo*, ed. Cory and Masters (New York: The Julian Press, 1963), p.10
10. Bonamy Dobree, "Durrell's Alexandrian series, *The World of Lawrence Durrell*, ed; H.T. Moore (New York: E.F. Dutton & Co., 1964), p.195
11. Liza refers to Pursewarden's fantasy in *Clea*. "The king marries his sister because he as a god like star, wandering on earth,...may not propagate himself in the children of strange women, any more than he is allowed to die a natural death." (P.191). At least in death, Pursewarden tries to live up to his fantasy.

Assistant Professor of English  
Claflin College  
Orangeburg, SC 29210



# Outsiders, Isolates, Environmentalists, Visionaries: The Spectrum of Descriptors in Contemporary American Folk Art, are They Valid?

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A.EVERETTE JAMES, JR.

The general term "folk art" encompasses a variety of forms of expression. Rather than recognize that this is a continuum of aesthetics, the current interest seems to be in placing these artists into categories without recognition that the circumstances under which they create their images is quite determinative. It would seem more productive to accept the idea that the real focus should be the artist's similar and collective inner creativity rather than the object's relationships to those fashioned by traditional artistic conventions or even the original work of others.

The term "outsider" suggests that these artists may be estranged from the social mainstream, while, in fact, many of these artists are an active part of their resident community and participate with their general environment. For example, on a recent visit to Lonnie Holley, a major theme of our interaction consisted of his informing us about his work with the "poor black children." His purpose in this voluntary effort seems to be to act as a role model of resident creativity and his own brand of civic responsibility under rather dire circumstances. Lonnie hopes to preserve a tradition of the creation of folk art by blacks as does his friend, Charlie Lucas. Certainly, 84<sup>th</sup> Street North is outside the posh residential areas of Birmingham, but is not "outside" the world of Lonnie Holley and disadvantaged blacks. Would one have considered Robert Henri, John Sloan, or George Luks "outsiders" because they chose as subject matter "ashcans and clotheslines" representing, the urban squalor of their new American shortly after the turn of the century? Outrageous they may have been, but "outsiders" they were not.

Reuben Miller, Howard Finster, and the late Benjamin Franklin Perkins have, at various times, been described as outsiders; yet as ministers they are significant public figures in their own environment, and much of their inspiration comes from a knowledge of current events. Miller and Finster were very attuned to the threats of terrorism and to the events of the "War in the Desert" and have created their own visual interpretations of problems of global magnitude. The Reverend B.D. Perkins fueled his unpretentious patriotism with an appreciation of the relative status of our country in the total world order. Perkins has interpreted these revelations in his imagery regaling the virtues of his native

land. Although his last congregation numbered only about 20 dedicated souls, Perkins' visions undoubtedly represent a significant community force. He expressed his political convictions in the "burning of the flag" issue and taught this respect for things Americans to local school children. These artists are isolated from the mainstream of traditional art, but why must this, by definition, be considered "Isolated?"

When one encounters the term "isolate," the prerogative term brings forth visions of a mystic living on a rock high above the population zone or even the tree line. We further insist that these artists should be relatively untouched by civilization and certainly not tainted with offerings of the popular media. The savage creative instinct in these isolates should be uncluttered and unaffected by the normal societal influences incumbent upon their contemporaries in traditional art circles. This obviously is hyperbole but not without some substance. Part of this vision could be fulfilled by someone like James Harold Jennings, who lives in a series of school buses in a community with the appropriate appellation of Pinnacle. Pinnacle is no more than a bump on the geographic relief map, and the paved road reaches to within 50 yards of James Harold Jennings' world. However, when you are greeted by a middle-aged man pedaling, his bicycle attired in shorts, combat boots, a linesman's leather vest filled with artists' as well as carpenters' tools, a scruffy mane flowing to his waist and all of this array set off by a crown fashioned from bark atop a toboggan, "isolate" might certainly be one of the descriptors considered. If this initial presentation were followed, as it predictably will be, by a semi-lucid discussion of "metapsychosis", a more lasting image begins to take shape. However, if you take the time to actually visit and exchange ideas with Jennings, you soon realize that he is in very close touch with reality, the global situation, the traditional canons of art and even an assessment of his own place in the art world. Leafing, through his readily displayed order book, you find notes, business cards, names and addresses of the rich and infamous, art historians and curators, and a number of well-known and fashionable dealers. Jennings may only be isolated from or outside conventional reality by his personal interpretation of the facts of the world. Jennings dances to the tune of his own chosen rhythm, but he is neither unaware of society nor without interest in the world around him. His theme of "apostle of the sun, moon and stars," the forced speech pattern and wry smile make one wonder whether James Harold is having fun with you and may even be partially manufacturing his own appearance of a visionary or "outsider" knowingly.

Sometimes geography appears to create an isolate or outsider. Sam Doyle, for example, lived in the community of Frogmore on St. Helena Island, east of the town of Beaufort (not "Bofoat"; that's another state), South Carolina. His neighbors were Gullah blacks whose lyrical dialect and social and religious traditions set them apart from the low country whites of South Carolina. The citizens there on St. Helena Island had powerful, strong beliefs and practices of African and African-Caribbean origin. Witch doctors, voodoo (hoodoo) apparitions, mojo men and dream interpretations were an intrinsic part of their culture. For years St. Helena Island was separated by the mainland and was only reached

by boat. Many of the ideas unique to this isolated area were captured by Sam Doyle in the images he composed using ordinary house paint on tin and set out in his yard for the elements to "cure" and probably for others to see. However, Doyle also painted his versions of Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson and other black public figures he became aware of from the news media. Sam Doyle. Remote? Yes. Isolated? Not entirely. Interesting, whimsical and original in presentation? Most definitely!

Walter Anderson was a painter traditionally trained as an artist in New York, as was the Reverend McKendree-Long who studied with William Merritt Chase in Italy. Both evidenced later behavioral characteristics somewhat off the bell shaped curve. Can they even be considered as folk artists, as many art historians/critics consider formal art training as an unalterable criterion for exclusion from this group? The technical style of Anderson and McKendree-Long is unquestionably non-traditional. Also there is a significant temporal separation from the training and the artistic expression for which they gained acclaim. McKendree-Long had over a 20-year hiatus from art while practicing as a Presbyterian Minister. Walter Anderson left New York and pursued a quite non-conventional life style in Ocean Springs. Anderson prepared himself to observe the effects of coastal storms by lashing his torso to cypress stumps almost at water level during the height of a gale. These men were for a while definitely part of the social establishment but at a later time in their life they rejected convention and created their own artistic environment.

Many folk artists began their careers by decorating their own environment – not just to make it more aesthetically pleasing but often to embellish its meaning to them. Creation of a sense of place has been the predominant theme of artists, writers and poets since the beginning of time, but the dramatic manner in which these self-taught, self-actuated, creative individuals have done this has earned them the description of "environmentalists" – they have created or sometimes altered their environment. Howard Finster began with his "Paradise Garden," using material donated and hauled in for that specific purpose by his neighbors. Certainly, these were not environmentalists in the traditional sense. They were more of an affirmation of the "trash may be treasure" adage.

It is not difficult to believe that Vollis Simpson has changed his environment on the farm outside Lucama "just off Highway 301," where you will see monumental metallic constructions of horse-drawn wagons, airplanes and guitar players arising out of the rural landscape and with the wind moving to and fro some 40-60 feet in the air. Vollis could probably wax more eloquently about the NRA than the Sierra Club, but he certainly has changed his personal environment by these heroic constructions. Thus, in this same context, he and artists like Mary T. Smith, David Butler, Loy Bolin and Nellie Mae Rowe could be given the same description. Q.J. Stevenson is more of our traditional environmentalist. He has spent most of his life observing the creatures of the creeks and marshes near his home and creates images that represent their adaptations for survival, the fossil remains and his own private ideas about man's treatment of God's legacy.

In the Koncyo traditions, huts and houses were often decorated to either release or toward of certain spirits. Identifiable types of structures could be characterized by exterior symbols placed there for that specific purpose. If one is particularly observant, this same type of decorative accolade can be seen in rural areas of America today and even in the ghettos of our cities. David Butler placed objects on tin outside his house, and Mary T. Smith put them in her yard almost as decorative fences. Are these the symbols of a culture fast disappearing from modern society soon to not be just isolated but extinct or is this a personal statement by the artist demanding public affirmation of their private thoughts and aspirations? If this is their goal they move from outside to our definition of the inside.

Ralph Griffin and Bessie Harvey were "root sculptors" who fashion symbolic figures from driftwood, fallen trees, stumps, limbs and branches. These artists may be unable to articulate a direct spiritual link to Funzi, the spirit who invests water and hence, wood with its power, but the similarities in imagery are compelling. Their yards are decorated with the spectrum of forms and compositions these root sculptures can take. The effect upon the landscape is unassailable, but the characterization of contemporary folk artists as visionaries, isolates, environmentalists is, at best, tenuous.

When one describes a group of artists as visionaries, traditionally we refer to such well-known painters as Albert Pinkham Ryder, Ralph A. Blakelock, Eugene Higgins, Robert Loftin Newman and their colleagues. Their *métier* was nocturnal marines and idyllic landscapes. Often, their eccentric personal habits and reclusiveness proved fascinating to both historians and collectors, as did their experimental technical applications of pigment. However, in its context of contemporary folk art has different connotations.

Minnie Evans painted her dreams in an almost psychedelic fashion, employing, intricate relationships of colors and symbols to create images that are simultaneously complex and bold. The imagery of Bill Traylor may at the same time be naïve and simple yet wonderfully sophisticated. The interpretations of the paintings of this former slave are, indeed, in concert with the idea of visionary representation of African traditions, which makes the work of Traylor and contemporary artists, Juantita Rogers, Joseph Elmer Yoakum, J.B. Murray and Thornton Dial so universally acclaimed. These are visionaries in the broadest sense but not according to the historical artistic interpretation. Applied to our current folk artists, this characterization, if accepted, must be taken in the particular context, which somewhat discounts our artistic conventions.

Thus, one may attempt to describe the various contemporary facets in American folk art and to categorize these wonderfully creative individuals according to the determinative applications. This exercise may well create a greater understanding of the contemporary folk art genre and allow a certain familiarity with specific expressions of this movement. However, these descriptions and characterizations if applied at all should be considered in a non-traditional format, as should the images themselves. Folk art is appealing, on the one hand, for its different interpretation of a familiar reality and on the other, for its departure from unconventional origins of inspired imagery.



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# Ibsen's Marriage of Art and Life: A Lucid Examination

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P. EMEKA NWABUEZE

Henrik Ibsen is one of those few dramatists whose plays have been subjected to an avalanche of critical analyses. Many analytical discussions of Ibsen's work have been hasty, sometimes bordering on stark emptiness, while some have been very carefully and cautiously done. However, for a clearer understanding of Ibsen's art, Ibsen the man and Ibsen the playwright should be carefully joined as a bi-partite entity. Critics like George Bernard Shaw have vehemently called our attention to Ibsen's idealism, and most Ibsen scholars seem to be obsessed with this idea. But idealism is not the main motivation of Ibsen's creativity. That Ibsen is a prolific writer and an indefatigable moralist is not debatable. But most of his works, especially his family plays, are not merely motivated by his obsession for morality. His writing is a marriage of art and life.

It is the aim of this paper to trace the facts and situations, even problems, attendant on Ibsen's family life and discern how these have influenced his writing. We shall also examine the characters in some plays of Ibsen to see whether they resemble family members and friends, the main aim being to discover how their character, personality, problems and situations have been injected into the plays. This exercise will enable us to see clearly how the "ghosts" of Ibsen's life, as is the case of Mrs. Alving, also haunt his art.

Let me hasten to say, at this juncture, that the experience of an artist constitutes the artistic range of that creative writer. Since the valuable raw material to the artist is his own experience, he is comfortable when he writes about the types of things he encounters and the types of people with whom he has come into contact. Creativity, therefore, results from the vision of the individual artist, coupled with a deliberate urge on the part of that artist to express the vision. A work of art, evidently, results from the desire to communicate such vision to others. The ability to blend personal experience with universality, divorcing it from apparent subjectivity, makes the interesting difference between good and bad writing. Ibsen was able to do this excellently and this is why his works have been able to stand the test of time.

## **Ibsen the man and Ibsen the Playwright**

### *A Bi-partite approach*

P.F.D. Tennant, in *Ibsen's Dramatic Technique*, maintains that there are two

personalities perceivable in Ibsen – the real and outward personalities. Tennant opines that

One can hardly say that, regarded from the point of view of experience, Ibsen's work can be conceived as a reflection of this outward man. But as we have seen, this outward man was a studied pose, a fortification behind which to conceal himself. The real man is revealed in the fixed pattern of themes which recur in his work, or realized in his art, desires which moral cowardice forbade him to fulfill in his life.<sup>1</sup>

This conflict of art and life has continued to intrude into Ibsen's plays and has considerably influenced the theme of the plays. Significantly, almost all Ibsen's plays have as their basic situation the family complex. This situation is further broken into themes which he uses to form the dramatic conflict of his plays. Some of these themes are problems of marriage, parent/child relationship, incest, illegitimacy and heredity. Some of the problems recur in several plays, but the major problem of family relations continues to exist in all his major plays. What Ibsen supporters call his campaign for moral reform by exposing the hypocrisy of the middle class, should also be seen as Ibsen's exposure of his own family problems as well as situations he has lived through in his own life.

### **Exile and Return Technique**

The style with which Ibsen writes not only centers on the family, but is similar in almost all his family plays. A careful appraisal of Ibsen's major plays discloses a static dramatic technique. A technique that registers the family situation as the soul of existence. To show the social impact of the family situation in the lives of the personages, he presents a picture of a family situation in the lives of the personages, he presents a picture of a family living its life and on the surface, loving each other. Then a visitor, sexually an old friend of the family who had been "exiled" for one reason or another, arrives. It is the old friend who leads Ibsen to the exposition of the several aspects of the play, because the old friend discusses, chats and recollects the past and, if possible, the intervening period his "exile". Ibsen is careful to make the "exile" reflect exility of physical presence, not exility of affection. Thus, a possible return from exile is foreshadowed quite early in the plays. The time of recollection is endless. The catastrophe comes when the influence of the past is made to weight on the present. In almost all cases, the visitor departs leaving the family to face alone the devastation and catastrophe caused by his return. This style pervades almost all Ibsen's plays that center on the family situation. A quick examination will suffice.

In *Ghosts*, for instance, Pastor Manders returns to the Alving family home after many years of "exile," and learns about the past of which he was formerly ignorant. In *The Wild Duck*, the exility of physical contact between Gregers and Hjalmar has lasted for about seventeen years before his eventual return. The resultant discussion that follows instigates the exposition and eventual catastrophe. In *Rosmersholm*, Brendel, the old tutor of Rosmer, returns from his period of "exile" and this starts the catastrophe. In *The Lady*

from the Sea, a stranger's arrival in the third act of the play marks the beginning of the eventual end. These instances are endless: in *A Doll's House*, in *Hedda Gabler*, the technique is repeated by Ibsen. This technique accords Ibsen the opportunity of exposing latent family problems without authorial intrusion. The technique has been most effective in not only establishing a strong point of attack, but in strengthening the conflict of his plays.

### Family Problems in Ibsen's Plays

The characters in Ibsen's plays are made to face family problems which are in turn made to serve a bi-partite purpose: to establish dramatic conflict in the plays and also enhance a lucid and progressive exposition. To achieve this dual intention, Ibsen resorts to his characteristic technique of exile and return. These aspects of family problems are expounded in Ibsen's family plays: marriage, illegitimacy and heredity. The problems are not pedestrian or regular ones that visit all middle-class families of the age. Ibsen attempts to make the problems unique in order to give them amplitude which characterizes tragic drama. Let us examine these problems in grater detail.

#### Marriage

Lack of love has been the major factor that prevents the existence of an ideal matrimonial relationship in the works of Ibsen. It is this lack of love that causes the eventual conflict which in turn leads to the final catastrophe. For instance, Nora's recognition that her relationship with her husband is really not the ideal one she had seen herself embarking upon, shatters her illusions about herself; and Mrs. Alving's discovery of her husband's extra-matrimonial affairs, and her inability to leave him because of the duties imposed on her by society, leads her to the final tragedy. These problems are numerous, and one finds either similarities or antitheses among them. Comparing *Ghosts* with *The Wild Duck*, George Bernard Shaw observes that

*The Wild Duck* is not, like Mrs. Alvings, a handsome home made miserable by superstitious illusions, but a shabby one made happy by romantic illusions.<sup>2</sup>

Looking back at Ibsen's family life, one observes that the great poet suffered a depressing childhood, a childhood fraught with poverty and lack of love both between him and his parents on the one hand, and between his parents on the other. Quite early in his life, Ibsen's father had gone bankrupt, and this had put the family into penury. It was under this situation that young Ibsen left home even before attaining the age of sixteen. He became an Apothecary's apprentice in Grimstad, was reported to have had no friends, and earned his living from them till the end of his hectic life. Owing to the poor relationship between him and his family, he never came back home until 1850 before he moved to Oslo as a student after having been jilted in love. The next time he visited home was in 1859, and once more in 1860. According to records, on each of these two visits, he merely came to beg money from his uncle and never cared to see his parents.

Despite the fact that Ibsen had given some flimsy reasons to account for his alienation



from his family, he could not adduce any reason to account for his reaction to the death of his parents. Tennant records that

When his mother died in 1869 he waited several months before answering his sister's letter announcing her death. When his old rake of a father, Knud Ibsen, died in 1877 he wrote to his uncle and thanked him for the care he had taken of the drink-sodden old degenerate, but expressed no grief at his death, and personal accounts tell how unperturbed he was when he received the news.<sup>3</sup>

There is no doubt, therefore, that Ibsen was reared in a loveless, hypocritical family, his mother a self-effacing woman, his father a drink-sodden scoundrel. But the lack of love in Ibsen's family is not the playwright's only reason for his grim treatment of the family in his plays. He has also had his own share of rejection in love, finally marrying a woman, not because of love, but for the purpose of fulfilling the requirement of society.

Apart from his tampering with a servant girl whom he made pregnant, the playwright had two unsuccessful love affairs. His first love affair was with Clara Ebbel, with whom he fell in love in the Autumn of 1849, but who jilted him early the next year. He later fell in love with a fifteen-and-half year old girl, Rikke Holst, to whom he proposed in verse in June 1853, but his secret betrothal to the girl was broken soon after by the girl's enraged father. It was this state of affairs that caused him, in 1856, to marry Susannah Thoresen who was described as lame, unkempt, and with a depressing personality. Further evidence shows that Ibsen even started flirting with younger women later in his life. In the summer of 1889 which he spent in Gosensass, for instance, he was known to have had affection for German painter, Helene Raff, and a Viennese girl, Emilie Bardach. One can, therefore, conclude that what some critics refer to as Ibsen's revolt against society may well be the great poet's recapitulation of the events that took place in his life.

George Bernard Shaw believes that the major problem in *Ghosts* is that the woman, Mrs. Alving, goes on manufacturing lies, making life joyless and unnatural for her husband. Shaw maintains that in driving her husband "to steal his pleasures in secrecy and squalor, they had brought upon him the diseases bred by such conditions."<sup>4</sup> It is significant, then, that Ibsen expects that a man who has a sensuous temperament ought to be allowed some freedom, even at the expense of promiscuity, so he does not resort to hidden utilization of pleasures, like Captain Alving.

In *An Enemy of the People*, one also notices a trace of Ibsen the man. A careful perusal of the play reveals that its greatness does not only lie on its idealism but on its being a rejoinder to *Ghosts*, just like *Ghosts* is a rejoinder to *A Doll's House*. Taking into consideration the avalanche of abuses and criticism showered on Ibsen after writing *Ghosts*, one immediately sees the resemblance between the fate of Ibsen and that of Dr. Stockmann. For in the same way Ibsen was abused for writing about the hypocrisy and excesses of the

middle class, a fact of which everybody was relatively aware, so Dr. Stockmann was “boycotted, stoned, and driven from the town, merely for saying aloud what everyone privately knows to be the truth.”<sup>5</sup>

### Illegitimacy

Another point that recurs in Ibsen’s plays in the problem of illegitimacy. In *Ghosts*, we see Regina who is portrayed as the illegitimate daughter of Captain Alving. The same problem of illegitimacy also occurs in *The Wild Duck*. This theme was also an over-riding factor in Ibsen’s life and was one of the reasons that alienated him from his parents.

Both Ibsen and his father agree in the account that young Ibsen was born in Skien on March 20, 1828, but they differ with each other as to his place of birth. Henrik Ibsen, himself, believes that he was born in the family house of Stockmann’s garden, but his father maintained that he was born in the house of a family friend, Wamberg. Traditions of the town tend to support the father’s version of the story.

But the most unfortunate story about Ibsen’s birth is not only the conflicting stories about his birth place, but the suspicion that he was not actually the son of his father. Hence, as young man, he was faced with the unfortunate rumour that he was an illegitimate son. This forced him to dread his father and pity his mother. In a family where the man feels that he is not the father of his son, there would be conflicts and problems that might be latent, but which would make an indelible mark in a person’s mind for ever, and affect his future dealings in life. This was what happened to Henrik Ibsen.

Professor Tennant who received a Cambridge Scandinavian fund for a study of Ibsen had the advantage of getting the libraries of Oslo University and the Bergen Museum at his disposal. This, in addition to the Royal Theatre of Copenhagen, the co-operation of the Scandinavian society at the University of Cambridge, and other field studies, helped him to arrive at positive conclusions about Ibsen’s birth. He states:

His father seemed to like to spread an air of mystery about the birthplace of his son, and this probably fostered a suspicion and a wish in Ibsen himself that he might after all not be his father’s son. Such suspicions would have given additional strength to an aversion, which Ibsen had felt for his father at an early age. An affection for his mother, which was perhaps rather pity than anything else, helped to group his parents in his mind in a relationship which pursued him all through life and stultified his emotional development. His father’s bankruptcy, and the family’s social ignominy when he was no more than eight years old fixed the situation indelibly in his mind.<sup>6</sup>

Another Ibsen scholar, Hans Heiberg, also refers to this point of Ibsen’s illegitimacy and states that “it was not Knud Ibsen, but Tormod Knudsen, the Telemark poet, later a

member of Parliament, who was the child's [Ibsen's] father."<sup>7</sup> So the story spread and gradually flew into every ear and eventually became an open secret. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the great poet then decided to address himself on this problem of illegitimacy with which mystery his own birth had been clouded.

Obviously, it is customary for one to deny paternity of a child that does not belong to him. It is also a known fact that in all cultures, Norwegian inclusive, no sane person claims a child that does not belong to him, no matter how talented or prominent that child may be. In the case of Ibsen, his suspected father did not deny paternity. As Heinberg puts it,

It is notorious that Tormod Knudsen in his old age had boasted in his cups that he was Ibsen's father, but this was probably after the legend had become common knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

Regretably, Henrik Ibsen was caught up with two fathers: his biological father and his social father, both of whom were drunks and went after the pleasures of life with reckless abandon. The marriage between his father, Knud Ibsen, and his mother, Marken, was of convenience. Knud Ibsen was a reckless man who dissipated the family funds in the pursuit of his pleasures. And this situation kept haunting the great poet. Further evidence proves that Tormod Knudsen, Ibsen's suspected father, met Ibsen's mother, Marken Altenburg, in 1825 and they were known to have fallen in love, despite the fact that she was already engaged to Knud Ibsen. Tormod was then a Clerk at the Sheriff's office in Kviteseid, and Marken was working for the Sheriff as a servant girl. Another evidence in support of Ibsen's possible illegitimacy is the recollection of Ibsen's friend and confidant while an apprenticeship in Grimstad, Christopher Due, to whom Ibsen had spoken, albeit with bitterness, of the details of his illegitimate origins.

Ibsen's suspected illegitimacy is not the only problem that kept haunting the memory of this great dramatist. His irresponsible love affair with a servant girl at the Apothecary's house in Grimstad made him a father of an illegitimate child and caused him to pay maintenance fees for fourteen years, despite his abject impecuniosity. This happened in 1846, when the poet was only eighteen years old. The girl was ten years his senior.

### **Heredity**

Another theme rampant in Ibsen's plays which seems to stem from his personal experience is heredity. Despite the fact that doctors of his days rejected the theory of veneral heredity as perceived in Osvald Alving, Ibsen still makes a point of heredity and seems to maintain that one inherits either intelligence or disease from his parents, or at least one of his parents. This heredity theme is also seen in *The Wild Duck* where Hedvig was in danger of being blind as a result of ophthalmic disease.

It is significant that Hedvig is the real name of Ibsen's sister who, as Heiberg maintains, was the only sister of Ibsen's with whom he was on speaking terms. Not that

such coincidences are not possible in life as in art, but it is certainly significant and quite appropriate to this discussion. Of further significance is the fact that *Ghosts* appeared at the time when there were arguments as to where Ibsen inherited his creativity from. Many Norwegians believed that Knud Ibsen was not intelligent enough to beget such a creative child. It was later concluded that since Ibsen's suspected biological father was a Telemark poet and Parliamentarian of genius, there was no wonder from where Ibsen inherited his intelligence and creativity. Ibsen's theory of heredity in his plays tends to confirm this conclusion. Also Ibsen had admitted, on interview with Edgar O. Achorn of *New England Magazine* that *Ghosts* was written "to emphasize the influence of heredity."<sup>9</sup>

It is my belief, therefore, that a reading of Ibsen's plays is like being initiated into the quintessence of his past. His plays are no documentary or factual recordings of the past, but the past obviously stands at the root of his writing and makes his themes universal, even eternal, thus awaking different kinds of emotions on the hearts of his audiences.

### **Ibsen's Philosophy**

It is necessary to examine, at this juncture, Ibsen's philosophy which, I believe, will help to clarify his views regarding the marriage of art and life. Ibsen admitted on interview with a correspondent of *Era* on April 18, 1891, that people have tended to discover things in his writing which he never thought of when he wrote. In the same interview, he further explored the labyrinths of his art. He stated that "when I bring people on stage I have perhaps – I think I can say in most cases – met these people in real life."<sup>10</sup>

It is not unusual for a creative writer to bring in characters he has encountered in real life and give them a different significance in a play. But it is obvious that Ibsen sometimes uses real characters and places them in the same situations as these which he perceived them in real life. And where this appears in his plays, it obtrudes. Michael Egan has observed that

Ibsen is never tired of insisting that all his writing – even his romantic plays – stand in intimate relation to his own life. 'I have never,' he declares, 'written anything merely because, as the saying goes, I had 'hit on a good subject...' Everything he has produced, has its origin in something he has not merely experienced (oplevelt) but lived through (gennemlevet). Perhaps he is here repeating in another form the definition of poetry as 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'; but this seems scarcely consistent with an idea he more than once repeats, that poetic production purges the system of fermenting elements which would become poisonous if not expelled."<sup>11</sup>

### **Ibsen's Art: A lucid examination**

From the foregoing, one notices that what Ibsen does is to have actual people in mind when he prepares his scenario. He takes situations into which these actual people were thrown: their behaviour, manner of speech, gait, manner of dressing and other

idiosyncracies, and matches them with a particular conflict which he wants to explore. The people could be members of his family, friends and acquaintances. The situation could be the one he has lived through, or the one his friends or relatives have encountered sometime or another in their lives. To support this argument, an exploration of some of Ibsen's family plays is paramount. In *Peer Gynt*, for instance, Ibsen recalls the painful experience of his impregnation of the servant maid. Halvdan Koht, in *Life of Ibsen*, recalls that "unquestionably, he (Ibsen) draws on this painful experience when he describes how the greenclad troll woman brings Peer Gynt their bastard child."<sup>12</sup> Henrik Ibsen himself admitted that the poem contains a great deal about his life. His father is portrayed as Jon Gynt, while his mother is Asa, Peer Gynt's mother. P.F.D. Tennant concludes that Ibsen's mother

Is the prototype of the self-effacing woman who appears again and again in Ibsen's work, first with Inga in *The Pretenders* and Ase in *Peer Gynt*, while the type occurs for the last time with Ella Rentheim in John Gabriel Borkman. The father is alluded to as the old ragamuffin Jon Gynt, but is treated for the first time with full objectivity and humour in the figure of Old Ekdal in *The Wild Duck* in 1884, when Ibsen was fifty-six. Oswald's outburst against filial piety in *Ghosts* three years before is an instance of the way in which the family situation still rankled in Ibsen's memory. It is astounding that his childhood should exercise such a strong influence over him as a grown man, but his life is a remarkable instance of a man's incapacity to grow up owing to early emotional reverses which are not overcome in later life.<sup>13</sup>

In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen used Laura Kieler as a model for Nora. Ibsen scholars believe that Laura herself knew that she was the person being personalized in Nora. It is also believed that Ibsen had, before writing the play, used the term "a doll's house" to describe Nora's home. For Nora's husband, Ibsen used his Norwegian friend living in Munich as a model. His name was Helmer, and he was said to have used iron-hand to rule his German born wife.

In *Ghosts*, Ibsen used the Chief Officer of the Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education as a model and caricatures his fiendish and hypocritical attitude in the character of Pastor Manders. At the time of writing this play, the Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education had informed Ibsen's son, Sigurd, that he would not take the law degree unless he first passed a lower degree called the "second examination." This had infuriated Ibsen, and he decried the Ministry's obstinacy. Ibsen based his model for Regina on the German maid he had while in Munich. The girl was described as very pretty, liked to play the lady, and was always in the habit of showing off her few scraps of the French language she had learned.

In *An Enemy of the People*, the main model Ibsen used in creating the character of

Dr. Stockmann was the father of his friend, Meissner. Meissner, like Ibsen, was a writer. His father was a medical doctor who was practicing medicine in Teplitz in Bohemia in the 1890s. This unfortunate doctor was declared a public enemy and stoned because he was said to have "ruined the resort's season by pointing out that there was cholera in the town."<sup>14</sup>

Almost all the characters in Ibsen's plays have real persons from whom they created and in most of them, the incidents the persons encountered in real life have been injected into the action of the plays and in a number of cases, serving as the conflict of the plays. It is evident, therefore, that what Russel and Standing<sup>15</sup> refer to as 'absurdities' in Ibsen's plays are obviously the great poet's effort to recapitulate events and people of his past, thus succeeding in showing us how temporarily we fare in prosperity and how finally we encounter problems and thus decline to ignominy and melancholy.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing, we have noticed that the recollection of the past serves as a motivating force that inspires Ibsen to write. Inspiration is a latent force in the mind of a creative writer and this inspiration is not enough until it is harvested and applied to achieve the ultimate. Ibsen had a lot of experiences which he had lived through and he was able to explore these experiences in his writing.

Many writers have, one time or another, demonstrated the irresistible quality of mind that helps to advance their creativity. Playwright Jean Cocteau<sup>16</sup> does not believe that inspiration falls from heaven. She opines that to write down a piece of idea when it strikes the writer is far better than carrying it in mind without giving it out to be enjoyed by the literary world. This seems to support Ibsen's art, even if this inspiration is the recollection of past experiences, especially as lack of inspiration has been used by many creative writers as an alibi if they feel too lazy to write, or if they suffer creative incapacitation. William Wordsworth believes that poetry is a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling," and tends to suggest that good poetry has been produced mainly by men who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had subjected it to long and deep thoughts. Mathematician, Henri Poincare, believes that the most striking thing about inspiration is "the appearance of sudden illumination, a manifest sign of long, unconscious prior work."<sup>17</sup> In the case of Ibsen this prior work is his experiences. The marriage of these experiences and dramatic art without authorial intrusion makes his plays lucid and universal.

Henrik Ibsen insists that the experiences of the past can form an influential inspiration to the present, even when the writer also uses his medium as a catharsis to purge the experiences from his own mind. In this way, he draws inspiration from the past, communicates the experiences to us in the form of drama and helps the reader to learn not only about the past but also possibilities for improving the future.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> P.F.D. Tennant, *Ibsen's Dramatic Technique* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), pp 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (New York: Brentano's Press, 1913), p.108. For more on the influence of the past in portraying characters in Ibsen's plays, see Gay Gibson Cima, "Discovering Signs: The Emergence of the Critical Actor in Ibsen", *Theatre Journal* 35, 1 (March 1983), pp 5-22.

<sup>3</sup> Tennant, p.24.

<sup>4</sup> Shaw, p.96.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Egan, ed., *Ibsen: The Critical Heritage* (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p.88.

<sup>6</sup> Tennant, pp 24-25.

<sup>7</sup> Hans Heiberg, *Ibsen: A Portrait of the Artist* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami press, 1967), p.22.

<sup>8</sup> Heiberg, p.22.

<sup>9</sup> Egan, p.333.

<sup>10</sup> Egan, p.215.

<sup>11</sup> Egan, p.424.

<sup>12</sup> Jalvdan Koht, *Life of Ibsen* (New York: Benjamin Bloom Inc., 1971), p.38.

<sup>13</sup> Tennant, p.24.

<sup>14</sup> Heiberg, p.220.

<sup>15</sup> Edward R. Russell and Percy Cross Standing, *Ibsen on His Merits* (London: Kennikat Press, 1897), p.22.

<sup>16</sup> Jean Cocteau, "The Process of Inspiration," in Brewster Ghiselin, ed., *The Creative Process* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), pp 81-82.

<sup>17</sup> Henri Poincare, "Mathematical Creation," in Brewster Ghiselin, ed., *The Creative Process*, p.38.

Department of English/ Drama  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

# Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*: A Comparative Analysis

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SAM. A. ADEWOYE

## Introduction

Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* constantly appears to its critics as the most locally produced work of an immature artist which cannot transcend the boundary of its literary provincialism.<sup>1</sup> According to Adeagbo Akinjogbin, if the book is at all accepted outside the country of its author, it is probably because like some other books of the author, it "contains some of the unbelievable things in our folklores calculated to temper his European readers as they seem to confirm their concept of Africa."<sup>2</sup>

Many censorious critics have seen the book as the most wasteful creative exercise in the canon of the literary world.<sup>3</sup> What this study therefore proposes to do is to demonstrate that a non-cursory reading and analysis of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* show that the novel has literary qualities that favourably put it on the same aesthetic merit with any other highly acclaimed work of art.

Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a tale of a superstitious sailor on an ill-fated voyage. In the story, the sailor commits a crime against the principle of life by killing an innocent bird of good omen – an Albatross. The story, which being retold to a wedding guest, accounts for the physical and mental torments which the protagonist, the Mariner, suffers as a result of his heartlessness in killing the innocent bird. The sailor is one of the crew of the ill-fated ship and he is the only one left alive back from the sea to his home-land. The Old Mariner attributes the misfortune of the voyage to the supernatural agencies working in retribution for his wanton killing of the harmless, friendly bird.

Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is the story of a Drinkard's search for his dead tapster and also an account of the labours, trials and revelations which the Drinkard experienced during the search. The journey, which the Drinkard makes into an African bush, carries him to the realms of imagination, subconsciousness and even to the world of spirits. In the world of spirits he binds and even wrestles with death, being part of the tasks put before him for trying to know the whereabouts of his tapster.

Looking through these brief accounts of the two stories, it could be observed that they are both stories of adventure, the heroes in the two stories being the adamant adventurers. Similarly too, it could be observed that the stories take the reader from the concrete world



to an imaginary world. In Tutuola's story, for example, the reader is carried to the worlds of spirits where strange events occur. The reader sees "The Complete Gentleman"<sup>4</sup> return his borrowed parts to their owners at the end of the market day. It is a case of a "full bodied gentleman reduced to head" (p. 21). The father of the gods is also introduced with his wife and so also are "The Red People of the Red Town". (p. 72) By the end of the story, the reader is driven to the town and place of the dead, where the Drinkard finally meets his tapster.

Coleridge's work also contains elements of the supernatural that carry the reader outside this concrete world. The sight of the "Skeleton ship" (p. 408) "Death" (p. 418), "Life in Death" (p. 408) and the sudden death of the Mariner's crew, are at once frightening experience that the reader is exposed to. A comparative observation of exposure to supernatural actions and characters can be quoted from these two stories thus: The theme of the love of God for all creatures, as well as that of the danger in doing evil is central to Coleridge's story. By killing the bird that hovered near the ship, not having the fear of the violation of kindness and gentleness in his eyes, the Mariner is seen to have destroyed one of the links in the flow of natural cycle. He is subsequently given a picture of disunity in nature, where things begin their source in an interchange of harmonies. It seems that every Spirit of the Universe is touched by the Mariner's wanton cruelty. The earth, the sky and the sea stay stagnant. The Mariner is made to see the effect of his evil act. by the end of the story, he passes the message over to the wedding guest, that mercifulness is better than hostility:

In *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, Tutuola deals with the theme of man's struggle to understand and resolve conflicts within his universe in order to achieve peace and harmony within his environment. With the dead of the Drinkard's tapster, he finds his own existence very hard because he cannot do without palmwine and cannot find a substitute. This is intrapersonal conflict – conflict within himself. On the interpersonal level, the Drinkard loses his friends because there was no palmwine for them to drink again. The need to resolve these intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts sends him on the journey. He is seen to have resolved the conflicts when he returns with a "golden egg" (p. 101). The supernatural power of the egg to supply whatever is requested of it brings the people back to the Drinkard which is an affirmation of the resolved conflict.

The themes of these two stories derive their similarities from the sense that they are both concerned with man in relation to his environment. While Coleridge impacts the sense of good as against evil in his story, Tutuola projects the need for man to maintain peace and harmony within his environment. The moral message of the works is an amplification of their themes. After narrating the story to the wedding guest, the guest becomes a changed man. Despite his initial reluctance to listen to the story, he finally realises that he has even gained enough experience to make it unnecessary for him to attend the wedding after the Mariner has left him:

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
Whose beard with age is hoar, Is gone: and now  
the wedding-guest turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,  
And is of sense forlorn: A sadder and wiser-man,  
He rose to the narrow morn. (p. 413)

The wedding guest looks about the best person to which such stories could be told. Like the Mariner, he was setting on a voyage too – to attend the wedding. The wedding itself is a materialistic occasion. The wedding guest is able to detach himself from this materialistic instinct of life after hearing the Mariner's tale. The story then assumes a religious tone or dimension.

Before meeting the wedding guest, the ancient Mariner has undergone a moral change of life through the experience on the voyage and like the Biblical Cain, he remains a wanderer physically and he is psychologically dead until he recounts his story:

Since then, at an uncertain hour  
That agony returns: And till my ghastly tale  
is told, This heart within me burns  
I pass, like right, from land to land;  
I have strange power of speech; That  
moment that his face I see, I know the  
man must hear me: To him my tale I teach (p. 413).

The result of the Drinkard's journey in Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* leaves some moral imprints which are in consonance with the theme of the novel as earlier discussed. The stories told within the mainstream of the novel have a moralistic import. The story itself is that of discoveries, and discoveries are meant to give lessons. The hero is exposed to metaphysical world. As it is usual in all picaresque stories, interest is not in the journey, but moral, emotional and psychological development. The Drinkard becomes a changed man whose past life is dead, having undergone an education of the soul. The two stories are thus the great moral importance.

It is importance to draw attention to the picaresque nature of the two works under comparison since this highlights the concept of heroic monomyth,<sup>6</sup> a characteristic feature of the picaresque tradition. Both the Ancient Mariner and the Drinkard undergo this monomythic process in the patterns of the 'initiation' 'journey' and 'return'. In Tutuola's novel, the death of the tapster initiates him into the 'journey' while his final return marks the last process of heroic monomyth – return. Similarly, in Coleridge's story, the Mariner's journey is the initiation; his experiences mark the 'journey' and his homeward marks the 'return' in the concept of the heroic monomyth. The importance of this heroic monomyth lies in the fact that the heroes, having passed through the stages, are seen to be morally transformed. Significantly too, a rule of mythology is portrayed after the heroes' return to

their homes. This rule emphasises the fact that the society in which the hero lives has to be under one form of distress or the other so that the hero's adventure will be of importance, to his society. Related to Tutuola's novel, one finds the society in distress; suffering under great famine, lawlessness and disorder prevail by the time the hero returns. The result of his adventure, with the golden egg, provides some kind of resolution. Similarly, the Mariner's listener, the wedding guest, on his way to the wedding ceremony is made to reason with life. Subsequently, he dissociates himself from the material-based society. He becomes morally transformed too. The adventure of the two protagonists is seen to be of great importance of their societies. This is another elements of similarity observed in the comparison of these two works.

The sources of information spurring these two writers to compose their works is of importance to a comparative study of their works. Coleridge's story is said to be based on a dream retold by a friend:

The Ancient Mariner was found on a strange dream, which a friend of Coleridge had, who fancied he saw a skeleton ship with figures in it (p. 404).

Tutuola's source is different from Coleridge's. The story is based on traditional lores, the indigenous customs and oral traditions of his people. It is an extension of African tradition embedded in Yoruba mythical imagination. The source is that of a Yoruba rural agricultural community in the pre-industrial times where palmwine tapping was a major industry. Also, credit facilities could be based on a system of domestic or agricultural service – (pawn). The cause of the famine was as well as the story of the complete gentleman are generally traditional stories in Yoruba folklore. Furthermore, part of Tutuola's material strikes one as greatly influenced by Fagunwa's *Cgboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole*. Tutuola's "Half Bodied Boy" in the said story could be paralleled to Fagunwa's "Ajantala" in the said story. It would appear that the influence of borrowing coupled with the author's personal knowledge of traditional African Folklore, guides him through the production of the story.

The plot in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is that of an adventure narrative of Woe to an impatient wedding guest. It is divided into seven parts, one part neatly dovetails into the other as the story progresses. With Tutuola, however, it is that of a series of short plays tied together to form a whole in the straightforward narration of the Drinkard's journey. The narrator-hero personae is similar to both books.

The literary styles of Coleridge and Tutuola are important areas for a comparative study of these two works. Coleridge uses the informal mode of poetry. He uses the style of lyrical ballads in the rhythmic, personal descriptive and free flowing meditative conversational address to a wedding guest. For example, consider this:

He holds him with his glittering eye –  
The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
And listens like a three years' child  
The Mariner hath his will.

(Lines 15-18)

Unlike Coleridge, Tutuola uses the narrative technique where the protagonist addresses his reader. The events are classified under different topics, each describing different events as they link each other in a cinematic pattern from the beginning to the end. The prose narrative technique emotionally draws on all forms of life-emotion, sensation and human psyche that are constantly arrested as the reader reads on. This passage is a typical example of what we mean here:

I said that, rather than leave my wife with him, I would die with him, so I began to fight him, but as he was not a human-being he swallowed me too and he was still crying "hungry" and going away with us. As I was in his stomach, I commanded my juju which changed the wooden-doll back to my wife, gun, egg, cutlass and loads at once. Then I loaded the gun and fired into his stomach, but he walked for a few yards before he fell down, and I loaded the gun for the second time and shot him again. (p. 110)

The adventure stories cause the reader fear, excitement, suspense, anxiety and surprise in the two works. The reader feels for the heroes in their different supernatural experiences. Their style, particularly in Tutuola's novel is effective in its totality because it mirrors Africans' concept of supernatural existence. It carries the reader to different worlds in a lined pattern.

Diction, an aspects of language, is an important area through which one can compare these two works under consideration. To any students of romantic poetry, Coleridge's poetic metrics are clear. Witness the following:

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:

At one stride comes the dark;

With far-heard whisper, O'er the sea,

Off shot-the Spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!

Fear at my heart, as at a cup,

My life blood seemed to slip!

The stars were dim, and thick the night,

The steerman's face by his lamp gleaned white; (p. 408)

If Coleridge is too formal in his use of elastic poetic metrics, Tutuola is too simple. Most critics often accuse him of this simple and unstylistic language.<sup>8</sup> In any case, Tutuola inherits powerful linguistic influences in thought from his mother tongue – Yoruba.<sup>9</sup> Often, Tutuola's wordy and repetitive style, arises from the translation of Yoruba idioms and proverbs into English. Consider this:

Then he was telling my wife to take him along with him, to wait and take him with us, he then commanded that our eyes be blinded and we became blinded

at the same moment as he said it. (p. 13)

Often times, Tutuola is ill advisedly crucified for freaking with the English Language. Yet, his descriptive power merits praise.<sup>10</sup> He vividly gives a description of death's house that one is readily convinced that such a place should truly be death's abode:

He took me around his house and his yam garden too, he showed me the skeleton bones of human beings which he had killed since a century ago and showed me many other things also, but there I saw that he was using skeleton bones of human-beings as fuel woods and skull heads of human-beings as his basins. Plates and tumblers (p. 13).

The use of imagery is another important level of comparing the works of Coleridge and Tutuola. A comparative study of the two works will be incomplete without reference to imagery, especially since the two stories deal in part, with supernatural experiences.

Coleridge fully adhered to nature and its agencies-rain, lightening, river and even death. The Mariner's experiences after killing the innocent Albatross and the effect of these natural elements on him vividly evoke our sympathies. The symbols used modify the sense of colour of one's imagination that the Wedding Guest feared that a spirit was addressing him. The emotional appeal of the reader is arrested and we feel the actions are real. The albatross's arrival to the crew while icebound is a symbol of 'life' on the troubled sea. An image of the alienation could also be drawn from the voyage. The story could still be likened to that of a slave who escapes from the slave traders and returns home to narrate an account of his experience to his people. The Mariner is estranged from home during his voyage.

Still on imagery, if the Drinkard in Tutuola's novel acquires more magical powers than his counterpart in Coleridge's work, it is probably because of his own 'juju' – an aspects of African traditional belief, which abounds in the novel. The Drinkard himself is "father of gods", (p. 10) and a "juju man" (p. 10) too. With these self-acknowledged attributes, he is able to make fantastic accomplishments. He could transform himself to anything anytime and for any purpose. These different manifestations of the Drinkard and even his wife are very important when related to the concept of "juju" in African traditional beliefs.

Tutuola's physical descriptions are often detailed. He presents places, persons and appropriate names for his actions and characters e.g. "Faithful Mother" (p. 68). "Water People" (p. 61) "Red People of the Red Town" (p. 73). The two writers display, vividly, their ability to relate images and characters that arouse felt-insight in the reader. The reader develops haunting instincts of personal suffering, perplexity, loneliness, longing, horror and fear through the images employed.

Elements of realism and plausibility seem to be lacking in the two stories. Tutuola claims that the Drinkard has 5,600 palmtress and drinks 75 kegs in a day! The two stories

constantly demonstrate the reanimation of dead people. It is significant to note, however, that these writers are more concerned with giving vent to their creative imagination, rather than recreating realities. They both try to make credible the supernatural and wonderful.

To a great extent, literary success lies in universal truth and transformation of actions into moral messages. This is where the element of universal application of the stories under consideration in this text comes in.

Coleridge treats God as just Lord. God awards ruthless and prolonged punishment not to the Mariner alone but to his colleagues who were accessories to the crime committed. This is how God pronounces judgement according to universal belief. God also shows that His love for man extends to beasts, birds, and other creatures. The happiness in penance and prayer is also true to universal concept. Most importantly, guilty deed is seen as a prelude to spiritual knowledge and discovery. It is often universally opined that the result of wrong acts draws one closer to God. This however, is within the framework of metaphysical interpretation.

Tutuola's tale shares these attributes of the universal application as seen in Coleridge's. The Drinkard's and his wife's possession of such super-human power is not far-fetched from universal imagination and can be applied to life also.

Another universal truth is the display and effect of human greed in life. With the magic egg that could give anything so desired, the people of the Drinkard's town misuse the power. Universally, people often misuse such opportunities granted them in life. In the story too, one finds out that human beings desert their companions and friends in moments of trouble only to re-appear when there is abundance. This is shown in the conscious or subconscious attitude of the Drinkard's town's people who deserted him when there was no more palmwine, only to come back when it was later in abundance. The flight between heaven and earth and its consequent resolution through sacrifice to appease the gods is true to life. In fact, it is a universal phenomenon. Though the two works take their setting from two different cultural backgrounds, one still finds out that some universal truths run through them.

It is important to note that a comparison can be drawn on the heroes of these two stories under consideration. Tutuola's hero is a young man while Coleridge's hero is old – The Ancient Mariner. It is ironic, however, to note that though the hero in Tutuola's story is a young man, he is able to perform wonders. He is unlike the Old Mariner who is being controlled by nature. While the Mariner is observed as an impassive character, always under the control of supernatural impressions, the Drinkard is seen as being active through his experience in the bush. He binds death, kills spirits, and fights strange creatures, among other things.

Similarities of ideas, despite difference in setting, are significant level of comparison of the two works under review in this essay. Generally, one cannot easily account for a

case of borrowing from any of these two writers, especially when we consider the sources of their work earlier mentioned. However, it is often held that the mythology or experiences of certain traditions or individuals often correspond. When such individuals use such mythology or experiences to reflect and refract literary themes in writing, ideas may be found to be similar as we have seen in this comparative study. The heroic tradition as reflected in the heroic monomyth, justifies the cross-cultural validity of myths. There is also the issue of collective conscious imperative in dreams. Our appreciation of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*,<sup>1</sup> then, as a work of art, should lie in our understanding of its literary qualities which have been discovered from our comparing the novel with a trans-oceanic work of art that has received accolade from both renowned and amateur critics all over.

In conclusion, our examination of the theme, plot, characterization, style, diction and imagery in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* shows that *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* compares favourably with one of the world's great classics.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example Babasola Johnson in a letter to the editor of *West Africa* of April 10, 1954 says that *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* should not have been published at all. According to him the language of the book is "foreign to West Africans and English people of anybody for that matter ... Tutuola's language consists largely in translating Yoruba ideas into English" (p. 21). Another critic, Miss Mercedes Mackey, a West Indian writer wrote to the editor of *West Africa* about *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. She writes, "The translation of well known and rather horrific folk stories into ungrammatical and incomprehensible English is naturally shocking to an African (or European) who was laboured with his grammar and got prizes for his essay at school)." May 8, 1954, (p. 21)

<sup>2</sup> Harold R. Collins, ed. *Amos Tutuola* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc. 1969), pp. 20-21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Akinjogbin is again one of the people who will never see anything good in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. He feels that the book has no literary value and "show(s) no mark of possible future development". In essence then, the book has been regarded as a misfit in the literary world.

<sup>4</sup> Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1952), p. 25. Unless otherwise noted, all other quotations in this edition shall be by page only.

<sup>5</sup> David Perkins, ed. *English Romantic Writers* (U.S.A.: Harcourt Brace and World Inc; 1967), p. 413. Unless otherwise noted, all other quotations in this edition shall be by page only.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Cambell in his book *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*. U.S.A.: ABACUS, 1975), pp. 36 and 37. For example, discusses extensively the picaresque tradition. As the pattern of tradition, Cambell lists: (a) The road of trials (b) the meeting with goddess (c) Women as the Temptress (d) Attonement with the Father (e) The Ultimate Boon.

<sup>7</sup> D.O. Fagunwa, *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole* (Apapa Lagos: Nelson, 1950), see pp. 31 and 95 for example.

<sup>8</sup> For example, despite all the credits that Bernth Lindfors gives to Tutuola, he still has this to say about his language: "As an undisciplined stylist whose imperfect grasp of English occasionally blocks effective communication he is at times extremely bad." See Amos Tutuola: Debts and Londofs in *Critical Perspectives*

on Amos, Tutuola ed., Bernth Lindfors (Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1975), p. 304.

<sup>9</sup> Robert P. Armstrong is aware of this point when in his article, "The Narrative Intensive Continuity: *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* says "There can be no doubt that Amos Tutuola is closer to the traditional aesthetic of the Yoruba than are those of his contemporaries who have turned to the novel." In *Research in African Literature*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (U.S.A.: University of Texas Press, 1970), p. 33, Vol. 1, No. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Kofi Awoonor realises Tutuola's merit; thus he says of him: "Tutuola's achievement rests in his going into the roots of Yoruba folklore to rediscover the great common soil of literature ... "Kofi Awoonor, *The Breast of the Earth* (New York: NOK Publishers International, 1975), p. 250.

<sup>11</sup> Bernth Lindfors broadens our appreciation of Tutuola's work when he says that "... Tutuola's greatest contribution to world literature may be his transcendent orality, his ability to translate the technique and materials of oral art into literary art". See Bernth O. Lindfors "Oral Tradition and the Individual Literary Talent" in *Studies in the Novel*. Jams W. Lee, ed. (U.S.A.: North Texas State University Press, 1972) Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 210. Bernth Lindfors also states about Tutuola's artistic contribution: "His (Tutuola's) originality set an excellent precedent for later writers who might otherwise have followed too parasitically the literary fashions of Europe". See Bernth Lindfors, "Amos Tutuolas; Debts and Assets" in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, (p. 306).

Department of Modern European Languages,  
University of Ilorin, Nigeria.



# The Quitclaim of Okonkwo and Lord Jim

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OSAYIMWENSE OSA

A great work survives by always engendering new interpretations simply because the mere fact that those interpretations exist makes it seem beyond the grasp of any one interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is today acknowledged as a classic of African literature, and Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* is a rich classic in English literature and scholarly discussion of both works is immense. When Lewis Nkosi asked Achebe in 1964 the main influences on his life, from the point of view of literature and whom he admired most amongst writers, Achebe in his reply confessed *liking Conrad particularly*<sup>2</sup> (emphasis added). This confession glaringly reflects Achebe's profound admiration for Conrad – an admiration which can tempt one to speculate that his fastidious character portrayal of Okonkwo owes something to Conrad's character portrayal of Jim. It is the towering character of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* that incites entitling the German edition of this work, Okonkwo – an entitling which is squarely similar to the entitling of Conrad's work *Lord Jim*.

*Lord Jim* opens with Jim and *Things Fall Apart* opens with Okonkwo describing their physical appearances and emotions and delving into their careers from young adulthood through their deaths. The deaths of both characters have been a subject of complex discussion. To Arnold Davidson, Lord Jim's death in Patusan has frequently been regarded as final proof that this character at last achieves heroic status and thereby vindicates his earlier failures to conform to his own high ideals.<sup>3</sup> Robert Haugh maintains that when Jim chooses "honor and death," "he redeems himself magnificently."<sup>4</sup> Ted Boyle suggests that Jim "gains immortality by his last unselfish act".<sup>5</sup> Ian Wyatt concludes his analysis of the conclusion of *Lord Jim* by seeing Jim as "the only hero of a great twentieth century novel" who achieves "nobility" by dying, in best aristocratic fashion for "his honor".<sup>6</sup> Paul Bruss's observation summarises many critics' perceptions of Jim's demise: "it is clear that a majority of Conrad scholars have enthusiastically subscribed to the view that Jim in Patusan does enjoy a triumph. Thus interpreted, according to Davidson, "*Lord Jim* is an account of how a hero's preliminary falterings end in final victory."<sup>8</sup> Unlike Jim, Okonkwo had no preliminary falterings. At the age of eighteen he had achieved tremendously – "his fame rested on solid personal achievement"<sup>9</sup> and this strongly underlies his pride. But he commits suicide at the end of the novel. Lord Jim virtually commits suicide by going single-handedly in spite of Jamb Itam's and Jewel's frantic attempts at dissuading him from going to a certain death in the hands of Doramin. There is a tendency for one to easily conclude that Jim is a hero in death after a superficial reading of the novel. But when one closely looks at the text and painstakingly unravels the knots, subtleties, and intricacies in it, Jim would appear as a

charming fraud. Herëin lies the complexity and richness of *Lord Jim*.

"There is but one truly serious philosophical problem," says Albert Camus "and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy."<sup>10</sup> Inherent in the word life is vitality. Although there might be mishaps from time to time, the continuity of life as a habit is there. "Life is a habit that one continues unthinkingly until weariness sets in and the mind suddenly asks *why*. Why continue."<sup>11</sup> It is at this point according to Camus that "the chain of daily gestures is broken. What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definitive awakening. At the end of awakening comes, in time, the consequence, suicide or recovery."<sup>12</sup>

For Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, it is suicide and not recovery. Was Okonkwo's "Chain of Daily Gestures" broken shortly before his suicide and was it the killing of the Whiteman's head messenger and its inevitable consequence that finally spurred Okonkwo to take his life? Was it Jim's desperation to regain his honor which he lost when he abandoned the pilgrims in the Patna or was his "Chain of Daily Gestures" broken before he courageously goes to his death in the hands of Doramin? These are complex questions whose answers are not readily easy to come by.

Critics who seek reasons for the suicide of Okonkwo, the protagonist of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* are faced with two problems. The first is the cultural enigma the suicide presents to critics who are foreign to the pre-colonial Igbo culture that Achebe presents. The second is literary: how to deal with the event the irony presents, for it is baffling and most unexpected that Okonkwo who, in the past, has demonstrated an incredible amount of courage and determination in facing his enemies (including himself) would consider suicide as a viable solution to the problems of the final moments of his life.<sup>13</sup>

Kalu Ogbaa only attempts to demonstrate how the Igbo cultural beliefs could help a careful reader to find motives for Okonkwo's shocking suicide. In his attempt he asserts:

It is not the fear of what 'the white man whose power you know too well' might do that makes him commit suicide. Rather it is the recognition of the truth of the statement, 'it is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails alone' (p. 23) – words of wisdom his father, who is considered an agbala, left with him before dying.<sup>14</sup>

Such assertion should be taken with a grain of salt. Robert Fraser in his own way seeks an explanation in the works of social scientists as a way of dealing with Okonkwo's suicide.<sup>15</sup>

A character like Okonkwo who has the mien and resilient spirit to endure misfortunes such as the loss of his yams during the drought that hit Umuofia (note that one committed suicide as a result of this), the trauma of his seven years in exile which he alone essentially

went through, and the humiliation of imprisonment, it is not the type who will decide on a cowardly act – committing suicide because he fails *alone*. Looking at Okonkwo's actions reflectively, one can indeed conclude that Okonkwo's suicide crowns his catalogue of impulsive actions and his catalogue of neglect of his duties.

Excessively impulsive, Okonkwo shoots at his wife Ekwefi for making fun of his gun and indirectly his hunting ability and misses by inches. Jim jumps out of impulse from the patna when he thinks it is sinking. Okonkwo and Jim have a common tendency to act an impulse. For fear of being thought weak, dazed with fear, Okonkwo cuts down Ikemefuna with his matchet. Does his fatherly touch instantly disappear at that moment in spite of Oghuefi Ezeudu's warning to him not to have a hand in the boy's death? Ironically it is Oghuefi Ezeudu's sixteen year old son that Okonkwo's gun explodes and kills; when he deliberately shoots at Ekwefi, he misses but at an unguarded moment, his gun explodes to kill. He kills the whiteman's messenger with his matchet and finally kills himself. His self is his last sacrificial victim. Okonkwo's suicide is a special impulsive act! It takes a lot of courage in the abstract to take one's life. There is not indication on the *ilo* that he had a rope to hang himself. His cutlass and gun which had given him fame are now useless and he leaves Umuofia earth to hang lifelessly from a tree. The ring, the talisman which unlocks fame to Jim in Patusan falls from Jim and rolls to Doramin's feet when he falls dead after Doramin's shot. Like Okonkwo's cutlass and gun, Jim's talisman is now useless.

Among the burials in *Things Fall Apart*, that of Okonkwo stands out significantly though in a negative way. Perhaps Jim's would not have been different. Unlike Okonkwo who took his life, Unoka was helped at least to his death by his Umuofia Kinsmen. He was taken to the evil forest to die of the dreaded swelling disease. Unlike Unoka, Ezeudu was a great man, and so all the clan was at his funeral. Like Ezeudu, Okonkwo was a great man but he committed suicide and therefore gets a burial opposite that of Ezeudu. The whole Umuofia buried Ezeudu with all pomp and gaiety – the ancient beat of death drums, firing of guns and canon, men dashing about in frenzy, cutting down every tree or animal they see, jumping over walls and dancing on the roof. "It was a great funeral, such as befitted a noble warrior" (p. 85). According to old Uchendu in his story in Mbanta: "Your (Okonkwo's) mother was brought home to me and buried with my people" (p. 94). Ezeudu and Okonkwo's mother received burial according to their respective stations in life.

Although Unoka dies of the swelling disease, he was taken by his people to the evil forest. But Umuofia people cannot even touch the body of Okonkwo. Apparently then, in this one aspect of death and burial, Unoka was more accepted than Okonkwo by examining indeed the manner in which the visions of himself are finally extinguished, we see that in dying by suicide, Okonkwo fails to be the man he would die to be. Obierika's epitaph – "that man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia", (p. 147) recalls Mark Anthony's epitaph about Brutus – "This was the noblest Roman of them all." Both Brutus and Okonkwo commit suicide. But while Brutus would be accorded a burial befitting a noble man by his fellow Romans, Okonkwo would be buried like a dog by strangers – a personal tragedy

indeed for Okonkwo:

‘Will you bury him like any other man?’ asked the Commissioner. ‘We cannot bury him. Only strangers can. We shall pay your men to do it. When he has been buried we will then do our duty by him. We shall make sacrifices to cleanse the *desecrated land*.’ (p. 147) (emphasis added)

Cleansing the desecrated land recalls Achebe’s earlier statement about Umuofia people’s action after Okonkwo’s gun mistakenly explodes to kill Ezedu’s sixteen year old son. They were merely *cleansing* (emphasis added) the land which Okonkwo had polluted (p. 87). Before this incident he has also desecrated the land by beating his wife Ojiugo in the week of peace. Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody halfway through, not even for fear of a goddess” (p. 21). Is Okonkwo then a polluter of Umuofia traditions when he is expected to uphold and protect them? Or is he just a victim of price and his major fear of being thought weak? G.D. Killam contends:

At the centre of the community is Okonkwo a character of intense individuality, yet one in whom the values most admired by Ibo peoples are consolidated. He is both an individual and a type. The first paragraphs of the book indicate the deftness and certainty with which Achebe establishes not only the character but the ethical and moral basis of his life and, by extension the ethical and morel basis of the clan.<sup>16</sup>

Such contention should be taken with a grain of salt.

As a true traditionalist, and as one of the nine judges of Umuofia, Okonkwo definitely has commitments to uphold the laws of the land but sadly he destroys the week of peace by beating his wife. He kills Ezeudu’s sixteen year old son accidentally – a “female” ochu, and he must be exiled from his clan for seven years. As a traditionalist, he knows fully well that committing suicide is an unacceptable action in Umuofia. Yet he deliberately does it. When one considers the events leading to this final act, one sees that the Roaring Flame steadily degenerates into a flickering flame and finally blots out insignificantly.

With Nwoye, Okonkwo had commitment to honour. He is Nwoye’s father. Similarly, with the Bugis Malays and Jewel, Jim had commitment to honor. He is the Lord of Patusan and he is Jewel’s husband. He assures Marlow that Jewel is the centre of his new life in Patusan: “You take a different view of your actions when you come to understand, when you are *made* to understand every day that your existence is necessary – you see absolutely necessary to another person.” Yet he abandons Jewel.

Similarly Okonkwo disowns his son for following the Christians. Reacting to Obierika’s story of the wiping out of Abame, he castigates Abame people for unpreparedness: “They were fools ... They had been warned that danger was ahead. They should have armed themselves with their guns and their matchets event when they went to market” (p. 99). But back in Umuofia, he looks very unprepared in the midst of the white administration.

When the District Commissioner summons the elders of Umuofia as a result of the demolition of the church, Okonkwo's misjudging of the call as reflected in his "An Umuofia man does not refuse a call" is almost the converse of his earlier accusation of Abame for unpreparedness. Popularly called "Roaring Flame", he should have been more prepared for any call especially any from the white administration, in view of what they had just done – destruction of the church. Instead, he goes armed with a machet but without vigilance. The District Commissioner successfully plays on Okonkwo's intelligence and Okonkwo's miscalculation of the District Commissioner's call results in his subjection to a disgraceful torture by the court messengers.

Like Okonkwo, Lord Jim also miscalculates: Brown successfully plays upon Jim's guilty conscience at a time when he should have been very alert. He should have speculated strongly that Brown is an ominous evil capable of shattering his peace tranquility, home, and honor in Patusan which hitherto had been elusive.

Jim persuades the Bugis Malays that it is best to allow Brown and his men a free and safe passage back to their ship and he pledges to answer with his life for any harm that may befall them if the "white men with beards" are allowed to go. The old chief Doramin is unconvinced and Dain Waris his son leads the Bugis to destroy Brown and his men. By his blunt refusal to lead the Bugis against the Brown party, Jim virtually allies himself with the robbers. The respective miscalculation of Okonkwo and Jim undermine their strength of character. The plots of both novels move swiftly to the end after their miscalculations. Released after a collective fine has been extorted from Umuofia people, they summon a war meeting on the *Ilo*. Okonkwo's beheading of the court messengers' leader when they come to stop the meeting is "a flicker, not flame, and it instantly vanishes in dismay".<sup>17</sup> Okonkwo's killing of the messenger and his subsequent suicide reflect his dedication to his own exalted image of himself. Excessively proud, he does not believe he is the type to be hanged by a white man when he himself can do it. By sacrificing his physical body to his concept of himself, Okonkwo finally escapes for good from the whiteman's retaliation but at the same time he abandons Umuofia whose culture he should defend especially at a time when the new religion and administration were engulfing it. Similarly Jim abandons the Bugis and Malays who call him Lord (Tuan) when Brown and his men pose a serious threat to their security.

After surviving the drought in which an Umuofia man committed suicide because of his extra-ordinarily sad harvest, Okonkwo's resolution is impulsive: "Since I survived that year," he always said, I shall survive *anything*.' (emphasis added). He put it down to his inflexible will. (p. 18) But he could not survive the courage to wait for the consequences of his killing the head messenger. Perhaps Okonkwo should have remembered his father and his words in his last days:

Unoka, who was then an ailing man, had said to him during that terrible harvest month: ... You have a manly and proud heart. A proud heart can

survive a general failure because such a failure does not prick its price. It is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails alone. (p. 18)

The juxtaposition of the statement of fiery Okonkwo and the statement of the agbala and philosophic Unoka "in his last days" is to *highlight the big gulf between their temperaments and their maturity levels*. Obviously old Unoka loves his fiery son at least by giving him such words of wisdom. But Okonkwo left no word of advice for Nwoye or his Community. Is this not a neglect on Okonkwo's part: Like Okonkwo Jim abandons his wife Jewel and the Malays of Patusan to answer the call of his exalted egoism. Unlike Okonkwo and Jim, Captain Big Briery in *Lord Jim* plotted the journey of his ship, took care of his dog and did a "handover" before he committed suicide. When Jim goes steadily to a certain death, Jewel in an agony of despair, pleads with him to remember his promise that he will not leave her:

You shall go? ... Do you remember the night I prayed you to leave me, and you said that you could not? That it was impossible! Impossible! Do you remember you said you would never leave me? ... I asked you for no promise. You promised unasked – remember" (*Lord Jim* London: Deut, 1924 p. 304. Other references are to this edition. In his reply, Jim condemns himself: "I should not be worth having" (p. 304).

In spite of this reply Jewel physically holds on to him. But Jim calls on Tamb'Itam to help and he looses the girl's hold on him and runs away. This is a deliberate desertion and Jewel screams at him, "you are false!" (p. 305). Is Jim's desertion of Jewel not a negation of his earlier statement to Marlow: "You take a different view of your actions when you come to understand, when you are *made* to understand every day that *your existence* is necessary ... absolutely necessary to another person." Seen in this light, Ted Boyle's observation of Jim's final act as "unselfish" is hardly tenable. Jim's last act is strongly a selfish one indeed.

These characters of Okonkwo and Lord Jim all too human victims of pride, and fear of being thought weak, can merit our sympathy but as honourable men they were quite shams.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Perry Nodelman, "The Art of the Children's Novel", *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol. II, No. 1 (1986) p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Duerden & Cosmo Pieterse, *African Writers Talking*, London: Heinemann, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold E. Davidson, "The Abdication of Lord Jim", *Conradiana*, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (1981) p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Haugh, "The Structure of *Lord Jim*", *College English*, 13 (1951), p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> Ted Boyle, *Symbol and Meaning in the fiction of Joseph Conrad*, The Hague: Mouton, (1965) p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Wyatt "The Ending of *Lord Jim*", *Conradiana*, 11 (1979).

<sup>7</sup> Paul Bruss, "Lord Jim and the Metaphor of Awakening" *Studies in Twentieth Century*, No. 14 (1974), p. 70.

<sup>8</sup>Davidson, 1981, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup>Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, London: Heinemaina (1958) p. 1. Other page references are to this edition.

<sup>10</sup> Albert Camus, *The Muth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage, 1959) p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ethel Cornwell, "Bratleby the Absurb" *International Fiction Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1982), p. 93.

<sup>12</sup> Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Kala Ogbaa, "A Cultural Note on Okonkwo's Suicide," *Kunapipi*, Vol. III, No. 2 (1981) p. 126.

<sup>14</sup> Ogbaa, 1981, p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> See Robert Fraser, "A Note on Okonkwo's Suicide" *Kunapipi*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1979), pp. 108-113.

<sup>16</sup> G.D. Killam, *The Novels of Chinua Achebe*, (London: Heinemann, 1969) p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Gerald Moore, *Seven African Writers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) p. 64.

Dept. of Languages and Literature,  
Bendel State University,  
Ekpoma, Nigeria

# Structuralism and African Literature: A Revaluation

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CHINYERE NWAHUNANYA

Despite occasional spirited forays into structuralism by a few adventurous critics, the structural analysis of literary texts has remained an unpopular and unexciting enterprise in the criticism of African literature. One reason for this unpopularity may be the challenges constituted by the technicalities involved in structural analysis, at least the way it is presently approached by its foremost practitioners. The consequence of this peripheral position to which structuralism has been pushed in the criticism of African literature is that we have a dearth of significant criticism and critics in this tradition. What we have is rather a surfeit of critics in the sociological tradition who, unable to stretch their imagination beyond a concern with the sociological content of works, are content with making disparaging remarks that do not any way reveal an awareness of the role structuralism can play in advancing the fortunes of African literature.

Yet even when such critics refuse to admit the relevance of structuralist criticism, it is often clear that their own critical practice has structuralist influences and intentions.

Take for instance the “form and content” critics of African literature. Their bold statements of intentions to analyse the *form* and *content* of chosen literary artifacts end up as exercises in the exegesis of content. This is due mainly to the fact that most of such critics do not possess the tools of structural analysis which are indispensable to a stylistic analysis of form. They, therefore, end up with superficial generalizations about “tightly structured plots”, “effective use of flashback”, “impressive deployment of symbols” and other such vague statements which tell us virtually nothing about the form or structure of the works being analysed.

The criticism of African literature is so replete with such examples that rarely can any criticism in the purely sociological tradition be found that does not evince this problem. This underlies the need for an alternative approach to *form* and *structure* in African literature, a need that structuralism has been found capable of fulfilling if only our critics would brace themselves up for its challenges.

Structuralism as a taxonomic approach to literature has a rather recent history. It could be said to have come into use with the formalist analyses of tales in the Afanasev collection carried out by Vladimir Propp, whose findings were first published in his *Morphology of the Folktale* in 1928, but which remained inaccessible to an English readership until the first English translation appeared in 1958.



To place Propp at the beginning of structuralist studies is, of course, an exercise in convenience, since if one went into an area like linguistics, one would find antecedent investigators who have progressed along structuralist lines, although their interest may not have been folklore or literature necessarily as was the case with Propp.

Structuralism is one of those novel analytical methodologies evolved and adopted to investigate some of those more elusive aspects of knowledge that have defied the established modes of enquiry. Like most academic enquiries that are explicatory, it arises from the inquirer's realisation that certain objects of study do not easily yield meanings unless a certain analytical rigorousness is applied to them.

All efforts made in literary criticism since the New Critics have been attempts to look at the literary artifact as an objective entity which can be analysed on its own without any reference to extrinsic factors. The assumption, of course, is that a literary object has its own ontology, and so such extrinsic factors as the biography of its author, its social context, etc. became extraneous details, a consideration of which was irrelevant to an understanding of the work.

Within this framework, literary works were approached directly and made to yield meaning, for they were seen as organic systems that must be approached on their own holistically.

Claude Levi-Strauss blazed a new trail when he holistically adopt this objective approach in his structural analysis of myth. He approach was unique because he was a ethnologist, involved in an area of inquiry where extrinsic factors were usually central to the analysis of data.

In essence, structuralism in the social sciences and literature means formalism, in its concern with form as opposed to content. It really began as a linguistic term, in the work of the Russian structural linguist, Roman Jakobson. But it relies heavily on the assumptions of the father of structural linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure.

Saussure had, in fact, established the important distinction between *langue*, the structural side of language, and *parole* the statistical side, as an integral part of his contention that language is a system of signs in the combination of signals and signifier.

Saussure was among the earliest analysts to recognize that language is a self-contained system whose interdependent parts function and acquire values through their relationships to the whole. In this methodology, the atomistic, piecemeal approach to the study of philology gave way to appreciating the totality of the work as a whole. This also marked the shift from a diachronic to a synchronic study of language.

The work of structural linguists showed that

- (1) Language is a system,
- (2) Language is highly patterned, and

- (3) The native speaker is not consciously aware of the patterning but uses the patterns nevertheless.

Levi-Strauss' insights from structural linguistics were the basis of his structuralist approach to the study of myth. And his most relevant work, in which he defines his views in clearest terms, is "The Structural Study of Myth".<sup>1</sup> This essay is inspired by Levi-Strauss' disturbance that a lot of confusion has featured in interpretations of myth since Tylor, Frazer and Durkheim, a confusion occasioned by the various alternative readings of myth which the various approaches make room for. The time had come, he felt, for the right approach to be found and adopted, since an "awareness of a basic antinomy pertaining to the nature of myth" is what "may lead us towards its solution".<sup>2</sup>

The number of investigations and reactions triggered off by essay are possibly the reason why structuralism has become almost synonymous with Claude Levi-Strauss. His contributions to structuralist studies have, in fact, been so pervasive in their effect that his image has dwarfed almost every other person that has made forays into structuralism. Our present discussion of structuralism as an analytical methodology is therefore basically a discussion of Levi-Straussian Structuralism.

Levi-Strauss' initial investigations into the way myths operate, how they can be interpreted, and how they can be better understood originate from his contact with the ideas of Roman Jakobson, during his tenure as visiting Professor at the New School for Social Research in New York (1941-45). Here, he derived two seminal aspects of his thought that he was later to develop.

The first is that "in linguistic behaviour the mind is invariably guided by a system of binary differentiation". Secondly, "in communication between two people, for the message to be meaningful there has to be a *code* of understanding at least partially common to both of them. This code operates at a more or less *unconscious* level, and guarantees that there is a *system* through which the units of communication are processed."<sup>3</sup>

Levi-Strauss finds the modern concerns with myth analogues to the concerns of early philosophers of language with linguistic problems. In the case of the philosophers of language, once the obvious contradictions were overcome or resolved, linguistics could begin to evolve as a science. This was possible because linguistic analysis recognised that language is a highly patterned system whose patterning the native users are not even aware of. But a patterned system, its constituents can be atomised in order to arrive at meaning.

Myths could therefore be best analysed if tied to a linguistic model, since the study of myth could best be conducted if myths are seen as a kind of language with its constituent parts.

One of Levi-Strauss' objectives in this essay is to show that myth "is both the same thing as language, and also different from it."<sup>4</sup> The main similarity which he sees between myth and language is the idea of patterning, and so he contends that we must be

able to recognise in myth and underlying structure and isolate the components of that structure in order to move towards a meaning.

In his view however, if a myth must be meaningful, its meaning cannot reside in the isolated elements (the mythemes) which enter into its composition, but in the way those elements are combined i.e. meaning arises from the relationship between isolated elements in a system. But although a myth is made up of constituent units, "the true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but *bundles of such relations* (emphasis his) and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning."<sup>5</sup>

Just as the structure of language could be identified by reorganising the components of language at the levels of morpheme, phoneme and sememe, so can the structure of myth be arrived at by reducing whole myths to the sentence level, and determining the relations of the mythemes which are revealed at this level to the overall meaning of a myth.

But although the sentences into which a myth can be broken down and which represent and carry the surface meaning of a myth may vary, and therefore change this meaning from one variant of the myth to another, the underlying structure that is the concern of structuralism, since structuralist like Levi-Strauss believe that it is this underlying structure of the "gross constituent units" that determines the real meaning of a myth. In fact in his later work, *The Raw and The Cooked*,<sup>6</sup> he sees this structure as an unconscious one, hence his questionable position that "myths operate in men's mind without their being aware of the fact."<sup>7</sup>

Myth being one of those universal expressions of human communication and consciousness, Levi-Strauss recognizes that the same myth can come in various versions. Therefore to arrive at a meaning, one must take into consideration all the practice among linguists: "to them [linguists] the only way to define the meaning of a term is to investigate all the contexts in which it appears ..."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, "if a myth is made up of all its variants, structural analysis should take all of them into account." By using systematically this kind of structural analysis it becomes possible to organise all the known variants of a myth as a series forming a kind of permutation group ..."<sup>9</sup>

These are the structuralist assumptions that underline his analysis of the various variants of the Oedipus myth, and cross-checking his findings on all the known versions of the Zunu origin and emergence myth, and similar myths among the Pueblo Indians.

In what almost sounds like a personal epiphany, Levi-Strauss notes two important advantages of his structuralist method:

- (1) it brings some kind of order into what was previously chaos; and
- (2) it enables us perceive some basic logical processes which are at the root of mythical thought.<sup>10</sup>

Given this kind of rearrangement of the constituents of myths made possible by structuralism, and its consequences, we are compelled to see the sense in Levi-Strauss' earlier contention in the essay that "Whatever our ignorance of the language and the culture of the people where it originated, a myth is still felt as a myth by any reader throughout the world."<sup>11</sup> When applied to written literature, we can say that this structuralist conclusion makes it possible for a reader or critic with the right orientation to understand a novel from Brazil, a poem from Siberia or any literary artifact from New Zealand, because what the procedure reveals is the relationship of constituents which add up to the meaning of texts. More importantly, we are to see the reasons for, and thus be willing to accept his conclusion that the Oedipus myth "has to do with the inability, for a culture which holds the belief that mankind is autochthonous ... to find a satisfactory transition between this theory and the knowledge that human beings are actually born from the union of man and woman."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Levi-Strauss justifies his thesis that "The purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of over coming a contradiction."<sup>13</sup>

The implications of Levi-Strauss' structuralism as an analytical methodology in contemporary scholarship in the social sciences and literature are numerous, and are evident in the variety of the reactions to the methodology, some of which I shall point out presently.

I, for example, have noted elsewhere<sup>14</sup> the cumbersome nature of Levi-Strauss' structuralist theory, and (following Okpewho) have observed that shortcomings of structuralism in any consideration of the mental processes at work in the imagination of the oral artist (the myth-maker) during composition.<sup>15</sup>

Isidore Okpewho has also challenged Levi-Strauss' subordination of the role of the artist to the idea of an intrinsic pattern.<sup>16</sup> Okpewho does not, in fact, see as valid Levi-Strauss' placement of the activity of myth-making in the unconscious, thereby denying myth narrators conscious intellectual control over their material. I believe it is illogical to suggest (as Levi-Strauss does) that both narrator and audience (as native users of the language of a particular myth) would be unaware of the deep structures of myth while at the same time understanding the mediation of opposites brought about the same structures.

Another point is that Levi-Strauss' structuralist reduction of narratives to abstract algebraic formulas side-tracks the literary and artistic embellishments of such narratives, apart from erroneously under-mining the importance of content.

And his contention that every detail of a myth has significance has been objected to by scholars like G.S. Kirk<sup>17</sup> who thinks that Levi-Strauss totally and deliberately disregards the facts and circumstances of story-telling which are an important part of oral literature of which myths form a part.

We might add here that the binary theory of opposites which emerges from Levi-Strauss' structuralism might only best suit some, but definitely not all societies.

Finally, for our reservations: the etic or paradigmatic approach of structuralism has the danger of imposing non-existent polar opposites on narratives which do not have them, especially if we are supposed to take seriously his position that the cohesive structure of myth is based on a system of binary coding whereby the human mind operates in opposites; and that the binary mode of thinking is a universal cultural expression.

The various problems outlined above would probably explain why structuralism has found very few adherents in the criticism of African literature. Possibly, critics who see literature as sociology *per se* will keep on running away from structuralism, because it seems to discourage the kind of explication that is not matched with a rigorous analysis of the underlying structural configurations from which the meanings of texts emerge.

One critic however who has faced the challenges of structuralism and demonstrated its relevance and applicability to African literature is Sunday Anozie. In various articles,<sup>18</sup> Anozie has applied the principles of structuralism to the analysis of certain texts, and in the process justifies one of his earliest assumptions on the matter:

If folklore, including myths, proverbs, riddles and other forms of verbal art, constitute an index ("charter" or "model") of a people's mind, then studied objectively and in the appropriate native contexts, they may be seen to embody a creative system, in terms of an original cosmology and hence a metaphysic capable of therapeutically illuminating the nature of a people's social, economic and psychological problems. Structuralism, as a new science of componential systems and significant choices and relationships, may possibly hold the key to an answer.<sup>19</sup>

It is this belief in the potentials of structuralism that inspires Anozie into writing his *magnum opus*, *Structural Models and African Poetics*.<sup>20</sup> In his adoption of the structuralist procedure in this book, Anozie acknowledges the evolution of the world "structure" from its original architectural meaning to the biological one; from its application in Marxian economics to the sociological (Pareto and Montesquieu); from Newtonian physics to the mathematics of Boole and Galois; and from its use in Saussurean linguistics to Levi-Straussian anthropology. He even recognizes the forays which philosophers in the French tradition (eg. Lalande) and psychologists (such as Jean Piaget) have made into structuralism. But it is Levi-Strauss that he identifies with, with few reservations and deviations.

It is ironical however that it is *Structural Models ...*, Anozie's definitive statement on structuralism in African literature, that has produced the most vituperative reactions from other critics, the most notable among whom is Abiola Irele. Irele has a number of misgivings about structuralism:

... structuralist criticism has an inbuilt tendency to treat literary texts as *objects*, as verbal constructs whose interest resides primarily in their

functional structures rather than in the creative imagination of which they are meaningful products ... This accounts for much of the arid dissection of texts that the structuralist method often produces in the work of its less gifted practitioners.<sup>21</sup>

Irele continues:

Structuralist criticism ... functions best at the level of theory or meta-criticism and can only deal adequately with universals of literature, not with the specific qualities of an imagining consciousness located in a world of movement and sense.<sup>22</sup>

Irele contends that Levi-Strauss' structuralism which provides a model for Anozie works "at a very high level of abstraction"; and, worse still, in his view, "its rejection of an empirical approach makes it unsuitable for any kind of concrete grasp of culture as a lived reality and its abstractions are unfitted for the definition of the specific character of any single culture" (Ibid., p. 161).

We agree with Irele that structuralist criticism treats literary texts as objects. But that is not a particularly novel discovery, neither is it peculiar to structuralism, since we see it as a central credo of the New critics too. That, therefore, is an integral part of the methodology itself, just as Marxist criticism takes off on the premise that the sociological content of literature must be interpreted within the framework of base and superstructure. If the dissection of texts carried out along structuralist lines is considered "arid", such "aridity", I think, is not necessarily the consequence of the approach per se, but is the consequence of the distancing occasioned by the particular critic's orientation.

Again, one wonders what is basically wrong with a methodology that attempts to establish that the workings of the human mind can be interpreted at a symbolic level. Or can we consider all the efforts of Ernst Cassirer in vain?

Levi-Strauss' own conclusions from his analysis of the Oedipus myth invalidate the suggestion that the empirical approach of structuralism is "unfitted for the definition of the specific character of any single culture". And Anozie's analysis of Okigbo's "Distances", Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* and Senghor's "Le Totem" conclusively show that structuralist criticism can deal adequately not only with "the universals of literature", but also with "the specific qualities of an imagining consciousness located in a world of movement and sense", contrary to what Irele believes.

Some of the problems with structuralism that form the core of Irele's disapproval of Anozie's adoption of the methodology had of course been recognized by Anozie himself in an early essay where he talks of 'the difficult task of applying the same objective methodology and criteria to works of imagination such as poetry, novel written in Africa' (sic).<sup>23</sup> He notes however that "... the difficulty is due mainly to the presence of extra

linguistic phenomena such as poetic images and metaphors, tropes, etc., charged with evocative associations of ideas and feelings.”<sup>24</sup> For this reason, he gears his efforts “towards discovering ways and means of effectively dealing with the problem of emotion-coefficients in poetry”,<sup>25</sup> efforts that yield significant results.

The problems with structuralism therefore are not as intractable as they have been made to seem. Despite its shortcomings, Levi-Strauss’ and his followers’ use of the method in either their ethnological investigations or in their literary analyses are efforts to reduce the enormous amount of information about cultural systems to what they believe are the essentials, and establish the formal relationship between their elements, as a guide to their meaning. To a large extent, they succeed.

Again, the taxonomic practice of reducing tales into basic units as a preface to analysis validates the methods of Vladimir Propp’s formalism by demonstrating the need for a taxonomist approach that can provide insights into structures of whole myths, and all forms of oral and written literature. In this way, he validates the position of the New Critics who see literary texts as creations with their own ‘ontological situs’<sup>26</sup> and gives credence to the efforts of some contemporary critics<sup>27</sup> whose analyses have yielded surprising results in literary criticism.

If one wanted to stretch the matter, one could also argue that the current emphasis on *form* in the criticism of our “form and content” critics is a reflection of the inevitable unconscious acceptance of the relevance of structuralism in the contemporary criticism of African literature.

But, probably, one of the most noteworthy insights we gain from Levi-Strauss’ structuralism, which derives from his conclusions about the workings of the so-called primitive mind, is encapsulated in the following statement which I am compelled to quote at length. It is a major contribution to social thought, and a heavy blow on the racist conclusions that have featured in ethnological and folklore studies since. G.J. Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*:

Prevalent attempts to explain alleged differences between the so-called ‘primitive’ mind and scientific thought have resorted to qualitative differences between the working processes of the mind in both cases while assuming that the objects to which they were applying themselves remained very much the same. ... the kind of logic which is used by mythical thought is as rigorous as that of modern science ... the difference lies not in the quality of the intellectual process, but in the nature of the things to which it is applied.<sup>28</sup>

Thus Levi-Strauss dismisses the distinctions that had earlier been insisted upon by earlier investigators between “scientific thought” and “primitive thought”. For one thing, the physiological configuration of the human brain, and the nature of the workings

of the human mind make such distinctions difficult to sustain, and therefore unnecessary. The dissolution of this racist distinction, is one of the most noteworthy contributions of structuralism to modern thought in the social science and literature, a contribution that has proved of immense benefit so far to African literature. Scholars who were erstwhile uncertain about the literary status of African oral literature, and the written literature based on it, now move with unprecedented confidence into these literatures, since the tools of structural analysis applied by Levi-Strauss to myths have been proved to apply to them as well. It is now left for the critics who have been shying away from structuralism to face the challenges squarely.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> First published in *Journal of American Folklore*, 68, 1955. My references to this article in my essay are to the reprint in T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Myth: A Symposium*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> This paraphrase is from Isidore Okpewho, *Myth in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Levi-Strauss in Sebeok, op.cit., p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> See Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, Harper and Row, 1970. This book is the first volume of his monumental four-volume *Mythologiques*.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Levi-Strauss in Sebeok, p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 99.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp. 85-86.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 91-92.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 105.

<sup>14</sup> See Chinyere Nwahunanya, "Towards a Literary Approach to the Oral Narrative", in Ernest Emenyonu (ed.), *Critical Theory and African Literature*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1987, pp. 160-176.

<sup>15</sup> For details of the oral formulaic theory see A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*. New York: Atheneum, 1976, Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>16</sup> See Isidore Okpawho, "Poetry and Pattern: Structural Analysis of an Ijo Creation Myth", *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 92, No. 365. (July-September 1979).

<sup>17</sup> See for instance G.S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, and Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970, p. 73.

<sup>18</sup> For example "A Structural Approach to Okigbo's Distances" *The Conch*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1969 (Reprinted as a chapter in his *Christopher Okigbo: Creative Rhetoric*, London and Ibadan: Evans, 1972);



“Structure and Utopia in Tutuola’s *The Palm Wine Drinkard*”, *The Conch*, Vol. II, No. 2, September 1970; “Structuralism in Poetry and Mythology”, *The Conch*, Vol. IV, No 1, March, 1972. Se also his *Structural Models and African Poetics*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, especially Chapters 2 and 8.

<sup>19</sup> See his introductory essay, “On Structuralism”, *The Conch*, Vol. II. No. 2, September 1970, p. 2. Significantly, this special number of *The Conch* is devoted to structuralism.

<sup>20</sup> See Note 18 above.

<sup>21</sup> These comments are from Abiola Irele, “Sunday Anozie, Structuralism and African Literature”, in Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed.) *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature, 1700 – The Present*, Vol. I, Lagos: Guardian Books, 1988, p. 159.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Sunday Anozie, “Structuralism in Poetry and Mythology”, *The Conch*, Vol. IV, 1, March 1972.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> The phrase is borrowed from Rene Wellek and Austen Warren, *The Theory of Literature*, London: Peregrine Books, 1978, p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> A modest list of noteworthy formalist/structuralist critics apart from Anozie himself would includes such disciples of Valdimir Proop as Alan Dandes, Eleazar Meletinskii, Ojo Arewa, G.M. Shrieve, Robert Georges, Lee haring, Geororg Horner, Pierre Maranda and Ellis Kongas Maranda.

<sup>28</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss in T.A. Sebeok, op.cit. p. 106.

Dept. of English and African Literature,  
Imo State University,  
Okigwe, Nigeria (Africa)

# The Alaskan Connection: The World of Macondo in Eskimo Tales

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CONSTANCE A. PEDOTO

When reading Frank Ellana's (a King Island Eskimo) tale, "The Cormorant Hunters," or Aloysius Pikonganna's (an Inupiat Eskimo) story, "Two Great Polar Bear Hunters," one notes a resemblance to the dynamic "magical realism" style of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Similar to the Colombian author, Eskimo writers create a Macondo—a fantastical never-never land or a potpourri of actualities and absurdities—in their own short fiction. One can thus appreciate and re-evaluate the South American post-modernist's "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" and "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" after having explored similar juxtapositions of reality/surreality in Eskimo literature.

First, though one must understand the historical-sociological roots of both the Arctic creators and contemporary Colombian writer, especially since the cultures of these writers are based on superstition and magic. The Eskimos follow an oral tradition in which stories are not conceived to be read but rather to be narrated by tribal historians who stress vocal interpretation, action, and long colorful descriptions. Pertinent is the fact, according to American writer Edward Keithahn who lived amongst the Eskimos of Alaska's Seward Peninsula and recorded their stories that the Eskimo culture did *not* rely on scientific explanations of Nature. Their fantastical accounts of Nature are traced back to the "angetkoks" (witch doctors or Shamans) and their supernatural powers and supremacy (*Alaskan Igloo Tales* 6). In fact, according to Daniel Merkur in his "Arctic: Inuit," the word "Shaman" was first applied around 1900 and, then, became the norm in the 1920's, when famed Alaskan Eskimo writer and explorer Knut Rasmussen utilized the term (Walker 12). Shamanism, as opposed to witchcraft, is considered a "socially licit and responsible practice that included the detection and annulment of witchcraft" (12). Witchcraft is an *illicit* "magico-religious" practice which opposes or endangers the balance of mankind and the spiritual being or power (*numina*). Behind the great silences of Eskimo narrators and the concentration of the Inuit society on animals, and talking or possessed animal forms, is the philosophy of the power of words which can establish contact with the named "thing's" very spiritual being or essence. Linguistic expression therefore, produced through *breath* or the "physical expression of the sacred life principle," is a sacred act and one associated with the deity *Sila* or Air (Brown 142). A concomitant point, too, is that language, in the Arctic world, is not limited to the human condition, as all created beings have their own special meaningful language (144). Verbal exchange extends to all natural phenomena—voices of thunder, birds, bears, etc. Thus, Eskimo stories are inherently "magical," due to the divinity of words and to verbal communication between natural phenomena.

Likewise, Garcia Marquez's mythical setting of Macondo, really an old banana

plantation situated nearby the author's birthplace of Aracataca, becomes in his fiction simultaneously a magical "wonder-land" and an embodiment of all legends, myths, and superstitions of Latin America. Garcia Marquez, in many of his interviews, reminds his audience that Latin American culture is intrinsically fantastical. Especially his birthplace of Aracataca, a small Caribbean town along Colombia's north coast, is known for a people whose descendants were pirates, smugglers, and black slaves. The writer's fictional Macondo, which is a guise for Aracataca, flourished in the early 1900's when the North American United Fruit Company strengthened economically this area, but became a ghost town in 1941 when this company withdrew from Colombia. What did remain, though, were the oral stories/myths of ghosts and superstitious beliefs or happenings which were passed down from Garcia Marquez's grandparents and aunts (Swanson 141-42). Gypsies were not uncommon to this area either and their tales enriched Colombian literature. Interesting, like the magical power of the word in the Eskimo culture, so too "Macondo" conjures a multitude of magical *and* religious connotations. It is Bantu in origin, most likely brought to Colombia by Bantu-speaking slaves who worked the coastal plantations of the Caribbean (Minta 144). "Kondo" and "makondo" (plural) mean "banana" in many Bantu languages and, according to critic German de Granda, this fruit in the Bantu world can cure illnesses as well as it can represent the preferred food of the devil (144). Therefore, resembling the arctic literature, the region of Aracataca—and the world of Macondo—is saturated with fiction dealing with ordinary experiences tinged by supernatural incidents. Also, Macondo, which represents the rise (between 1909-18) and fall (afterward 1918) of the banana company, symbolically suggests the rise/fall of man's/woman's spirits. According to Garcia Marquez himself in an interview, his own grandmother vivified for him his famous attributed style of "magical realism:"

[She] could tell the story of an event, or provide an explanation for something which had happened, in a way that carried complete conviction, and seemed to obey some internal logic, and yet which was, from an objective point of view, beyond all reason, fantastic. (Minta 36-37).

How alike, therefore, is Frank Ellana's "The Cormorant Hunters," a tragic perspective of the Alaskan wilderness told through "magical realism," to Garcia Marquez's tragicomic piece of short fiction, namely "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World." For instance, the former's tale of infidelity of the cormorant hunter's wife, her eventual murder, and the quasi-humorous suicide of the hunter himself, recalls the extreme realism of the tragicomedy of the latter's women folk in Esteban who provocatively prepare the dead body of a washed-ashore fisherman for a proper burial. Turning to Ellana's short story, a husband and wife traditionally in the fall journeyed to the northeast point of King Island, toward Putu a huge cavity in the cliffs along the eastern shore of this island. Here amongst the crags and crevices would nest the cormorants, tall long-necked birds, characterized by a large pouch under the bill used to retain captured fish. The husband, as

customary, would tie around his waist a piece of walrus rope and slowly lower himself down the treacherous cliff to kill the sleeping sea birds, accumulating at least ten of them before beginning the equally dangerous upward return to safety. Somehow he fell; miraculously, he whirled the rope in the strong sea winds and managed to land on another pinnacle of rock, Qulaguq. The poor hunter's wife who had mysteriously left her position was found back at home in a *truly embarrassing and humorous position* with another man. Fearing the loss of his life, the wife's lover escaped. Although the hunter realized now the connection between his inconceivable fall and adulterous wife, he took no action throughout the winter. However, in the spring, he invited all of the King Islanders for a celebration on the crest of King Island, on the rocky pinnacle of Naniurait. After eating and dancing, he began to harass, then to beat his wife mercilessly. When she died, he continued to throw rocks at her, completely burying her. Then, fantastistically, he ran with full speed to the edge of the cliff. Leaping down, he landed on a rock between his legs and was severed in two. As the writer, Ellana, concludes: "It was a terrible thing they did, that couple, those two" (Murray 300).

In a similar tale of a man and the sea, Garcia Marquez paints a realistic yet fantastical tale of a deceased man washed ashore and found by islanders. Again, death (reality) and comedy and magic are intermingled. Namely, in "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World," when the corpse of the huge Esteban is dragged from the deadly webs of the sea, and after the children have "played with" this strange creature, the women of the village visualize him as a god or as something larger than life itself. They fantastistically paint him as having been condemned to go through doors sideways and to hitting his head on low ceiling beams. They spin tales of his former greatness and even sexually fantasize, like a group of, whores, about his superman-like physical organs:

They secretly compared him to their own men, thinking that for all their lives theirs were incapable of doing what he could do in one night, and they ended up dismissing them deep in their hearts as the weakest, meanest, and most useless creatures on earth. (*Innocent Erendira and Other Stories* 198)

Needless to say that the husbands of these women were annoyed by this "womanish frivolity" and even jealous and hateful. Yet, the sexual comedy continues, echoing the provocative cormorant hunter's wife playfulness with her lover, as these fishermen's wives bedeck the deceased hunk with a scapular and wrist compass and as they perversely dress Esteban in all newly sewn clothes. Magic and actuality co-mingle at the finale of "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" as the mythic dead body is tossed back into the sea, resembling the cormorant hunter's wife who is beaten and flung to her death after a day of dancing and festivities; yet, the power of fantasy remains. For, at the end of the story, the women's actualities have been reconstructed as now everything would be different:

... their houses would have wider doors, higher ceilings, and stronger floors so that Esteban's memory could go everywhere without bumping

into beams and so that no one in the future would dare whisper the big boob finally died, too bad, the handsome fool has finally died, because they were going to paint their house fronts gay colors to make Esteban's memory eternal . . . (201).

The tale ends with the female protagonists' recreating a new legend, a novel town (that of Esteban's village), and, most significantly, an unorthodox perspective on life which will be in continual renovation.

Furthermore, Aloysius Pikonganna, on the other hand, evokes the mystical element of the arctic wilderness and of his heritage as an Inupiat Eskimo in his tale entitled "Two Great Polar Bear Hunters." This magical-realistic tale of the immortality and spirituality of a huge bear appears, likewise, in Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" where an aged angel refuses to die and "spirituality" is reviewed—since he does not fit the typical mode of a youthful, Latin-speaking angel. In the first short story two hunters, Avuk and Kuguk, begin their hunt on the pack ice at King Island. The latter started out earlier; his friend discovers enormous polar bear tracks. Fantastically, both Kuguk and the giant polar bear are found, lying exhausted, on the ice, after a long day's chase. Kuguk is unable to kill the divine like beast, hence his companion Avuk must slaughter the polar bear. On their night trek back home, pulling their trophy behind them, they begin to hear the eerie cries of a non-human being. Mysteriously, behind them walks a giant polar bear that, at the divide in their trail, rolls over on its back and then heads east toward Twin Peaks on the mainland. Suddenly, in the blackness of night, it completely disappears, but the same strange cries resound. Even the large brave Avuk refuses to kill this new apparition. The style of "magical realism" again infiltrates this story as an actual account is retold realistically, but, somehow magical elements are interwoven throughout without any jolting of the readers' perception or frame of reference. Real and surreal incidences simultaneously co-exist on the same level. The magical incidences, such as the strange noises, unreal size of the bear, and the bear's ghost, all are presented as realistically and as convincingly as the hunters Avuk and Kuguk.

Resembling the tale of Pikonganna, Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" (subtitled "A Tale for Children") is an amalgamation of stark reality, human comedy, and shocking fantasy. Yet, the way the story is told, no one questions the authenticity of the angel and its immortality. In fact, Pelayo and Elisenda, poor sea-folk with a newborn child who is very ill, capitalize on the fact that they have discovered an aged man with enormous wings in their backyard. They keep him in their chicken coop outside and, when the infant miraculously wakes up the next morning healthy, they attribute her cure to the strange creature outdoors. Elisenda decides to charge five cents admission to their yard for a peek at the angel, after throngs of neighbors and curious pilgrims from afar begin to jam their dwelling. With the money collected from curiosity seekers, the couple is able to build a better home. The old angel wanders in and out of the house due to his failing sight, gets the chicken pox at the same time as their child, and survives a series of ailments, regaining miraculously each time his health. During the winter months his

feathers began to grow on his wings and, suddenly, one morning, while the wife was preparing lunch, she heard a loud flapping of wings. She was relieved that a strong sea breeze aided the decrepit angel to gain altitude and to rid him from her already too busy life. The story concludes nonchalantly, as in the tale of Pikonganna, with fantastical and realistic elements mingling in harmony:

She kept watching him even when she was through cutting the onions and she kept on watching until it was no longer possible for her to see him, because then he was no longer an annoyance in her life but an imaginary dot on the horizon of the sea. (*Leaf Storm and Other Stories* 112).

The world of Macondo, in the fictions of Garcia Marquez, exists too in the polar culture. In fact, Ellana and Pikonganna's creations are extensions of their own personal living environments which provoke the intermingling of fantasy and reality, of the superstitions of Shamanism and the life-force of Sila with the harsh actualities of arctic existence. Similarly, the Latin American author in his short fiction records his background of Bantu superstition, the spiritual potency of the word itself "Macondo," and the depressed elements of his Colombian society with its poverty and futility of socio-economic and cultural improvement. The "Alaskan connection" is further strengthened by the Eskimo writers' and the contemporary Latin American author's tremendously potent sense of creative imagination and artistic flair in trying to capture universal man's/woman's miracles and mysteries: their fantastical actualities.

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# The Metaphor of “Anthills of the Savannah” in Chinua Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah*

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DAMIAN U. OPATA

In a recently concluded symposium on Chinua Achebe,<sup>1</sup> his latest novel, *Anthills of the Savannah* was, as was to be expected, the most highly discussed of his novels. During the discussion time that followed a panel session focused entirely on *Anthills of the Savannah*, one of the many vexing issues which puzzled many commentators was that of understanding what the words “anthills” and “Savannah” stood for in the novel.<sup>2</sup> If I remember rightly, I think that the discussants arrived at the following conclusions: that the words “anthills” and “savannah” are used in a metaphorical sense; is that “anthills” as so used means either survivors or indicators of potential regeneration, whereas “savannah” as used in the title of the novel implies a grassland but refers to an unnamed city (Nigeria?) in West Africa.

I have since reflected on these issues and it does appear to me that they are genuine and capable of further exploration. The latter is especially so because we are dealing with literary metaphors which according to Richard Boyd “display what might be termed conceptual open-endedness.”<sup>3</sup> In exploring the issues further, I would prefer to adopt a methodological frame work in which “anthills of the savannah” is treated as a metaphorical statement rather than adopt the perspective at the Achebe symposium in which “anthills” and “savannah” were treated as separate metaphors. This preference arises from a certain perception that the title of the novel, like other of Achebe’s novels, has a message to convey whose meaning cannot be fully understood solely by a simple recourse to an analysis of its major constituent parts. Two reasons support this perception. First, treating the title of the novel as a metaphorical statement would enable us to ask the questions: who are the “anthills” of the savannah? and what are the properties that characterize them as such? Second, *Anthills of the Savannah* is a novel that places the problem of political leadership in a historical perspective without proposing any solutions and so an understanding of the metaphor in which this is couched must be approached from the point of view of problem framing.

The history of the use of the word “anthill” in Achebe’s novels dates back to *Things Fall Apart* where it is used just once, then about six times in *Arrow of God*, and about four times in *Anthills of the Savannah*. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uses the word in a hyphenated form to describe Obierika’s compound to be “as busy as an ant-hill.”<sup>4</sup> In this context, the word is used as a simile but also almost as a synecdoche because the tenor which conveys the comparison is not the ant-hill. The aptness and vividness of the comparison is brought out in the fact that it is people who are busy in Obierika’s compound.

In all but one instance in which it is used in *Arrow of God*, it is used to describe Nwafor's nose. In this connection, its use simply conveys to us a picturesque impression of the prominence of Nwafor's nose. The second sense in which it is used is in a proverbial form, thus: "The little bird which hops off the ground and lands on an ant-hill may not know it but is still on the ground."<sup>5</sup> Here, it is used as one of a string of proverbs which collectively foreshadow the tragic death of Obika, and by some implication of Ezeulu's subsequent madness. In the context in which it is used here, it is portrayed as capable of generating in the perching subject an illusionary sense of power.

By the time of the *Anthills of the Savannah* the word is used in the plurals for three times and in contexts different from the ones in which it had been previously used in the other two novels. The manner in which it is first used in the novel is suggestive of what meaning attribute we are to give to it. In describing the scorching effect of the sun, the narrative voice tells us:

The trees had become hydra-headed bronze statues so ancient that only blunt residual features remained on their faces, like anthills surviving to tell the new grass of the savannah about last year's brush fires.<sup>6</sup>

This passage holds the key to an understanding of "anthills of the Savannah" as a metaphorical statement. There are two indications to this. The first and the most obvious indication is conveyed in the second part of quotation, "like anthills surviving to tell the new grass of the savannah about last year's brush fires," whereas the second but less obvious possibility can be found in the first part of the quotation which suggests that "only blunt residual features remained on" the faces of the trees. The first suggestion, that of "anthills surviving to tell the new grass of the savannah about last year's brush fires" as meaning "survivors" or "indicators of potential regeneration" tallies with the meaning given to "anthills" at the Achebe symposium already referred to. A second factor which seems to lend support to this interpretation is the way the novel ends, especially with regard to the naming of Elewa's child, AMAECHINA: "may-the-path-never-close" (p. 222), and the coming together, in the last few pages of the novel, of the survivors who were very close to most of the major actors in the novel. It is then these survivors who would tell Amaechina and her generation about what happened to Ikem and Chris. Amaechina as a female is a symbol of fertility, of regeneration, specifically of the likes of Ikem.

In the context of the total meaning of *Anthills of the Savannah*, what would the construal of the metaphor of "anthills of the savannah" as meaning "survivors" or "indicators of potential regeneration" imply? Before attempting an answer; it is pertinent to note that the "or" in the possible two meanings just given above is not used in a disjunctive sense. In other words, the metaphorical statement "anthills of the savannah" could mean, at the same time, both "survivors" and "indicators of potential regeneration" or simply any of the two without necessarily excluding the other. But this is as far as it goes. If we construe the metaphor as meaning only survivors, then we are faced with the question: survivors of what? A possible answer might be survivors of political bestiality, corruption, and high handedness. The examples of such survivors would be typefied by Beatrice, Elewa,



Emmanuel, Adamma, Braimoh, Captain Abdul, etc. A further question which might arise at this stage is what is predicated of these survivors? If we took these survivors as representatives of civil servants, students, taxi drivers, soldiers, prostitutes, maids, and peasants, it could be inferred that what they signify is that no matter the level of political high-handedness and brutality, we would always have survivors, and of course victims too. This meaning is rejected on the grounds that it cannot be the moral or lesson of so complex a novel as *Anthills of the Savannah*.

The other possible meaning, "indicators of potential regeneration" is derived from the image of the anthills. In the anthill are always the ants which are untouched by brush fires. These ants are the ones that will go on to build more and bigger anthills. Brush fires and anthills are familiar features of the savannah. The constant co-existence of the anthills and the brushes in the savannah, their continued subjection to the same experiential reality of the fire coupled with a higher survivalist tendency of one over the other tends to portray a certain sense of dualism characteristic of Igbo life and thought. In this context, the dualism is constituted by some type of binary opposites, of the resilient and the fragile, the resistant and the non-resistant. The fragile and the non-resistant yield easy way to fires whereas the resilient and the resistant would stay on substantially unaffected and unchanged. In the context of *Anthills of the Savannah*, we find that the structure of the novel is based on this co-existence of opposites. We find the likes of Ikern Osodi and Chris Oriko counterposed against characters such as His Excellency, Professor Okong, and Major Ossai. This dualism is comically but graphically portrayed in the scenario between Chris and one of the people who gathered on the Great North Road on hearing the announcement of the coup that toppled his Excellency's Government. The following passage succinctly brings out this dualism that is based on opposites.

'Go and have a drink,' one of them said to him, like a man who before his present state, had been used to exercising authority. 'I have had a drink. Several drinks,' said Chris, sounding superior without perhaps intending to.

'If you have drunk.... as I have drunk.... Why are you standing straight like that? Or is it my eyes?' The fellow's head was going from side to side like an albino, though he was shiney-black like ebony.

'I am not standing straight,' said Chris, unaccountably mesmerized by this highly articulate drunk.

'No, it is not my eyes.... You are not standing... I mean to say, you are standing as straight as a flag-pole. You get me? My difficulty then is: if as you say you drank as much beer as myself, why are you standing straight? Or put it another way. If two of us ate the same palm-oil chop, how come one of us, i.e., yourself, is passing black shit? That is what I want to know mister. Two people ate palm-oil soup.... (p. 214)

Two people ate the same palm-oil soup but do not pass shit of the same colour. Two people are subject to the same experiential reality but the outcome is different in each case. It is

instructive that the man asks Chris why he (Chris) should be “passing black shit?” The residual object here is the “black shit,” not Chris. The “black shit” is analogous to the anthills whereas the unmentioned yellow shit is analogous to the brush and grass of the savannah. One is easily affected by the phenomenon of fire whereas the other is substantially unaffected by the same experience.

This raises a problem of accepting the metaphor of “anthills of the savannah” as meaning indicators of potential regeneration. What is destroyed is that which imbues the savannah with a sense of beauty. The anthills are not known to offer good visual aesthetics and it is indeed remarkably noteworthy that we are told that “perhaps it was seeing the anthills in the scorched landscape that set him (Chris) off revealing in details he had not before experienced how the searing accuracy of the poet’s eye was primed not on fancy but “fact” (p. 209). There is no doubt that the anthills represent hidden life, but to see in them indicators of potential regeneration in the sense of giving spiritual reform or strength—which is what regeneration is all about—to the society and people of Kangan is only a dim hope, a hope as suspect as the unusual giving of a boy’s name, AMAECHINA, to a girl in a fit of unreflective ‘feminine.’ Because of these reasons, the two possible interpretations of the metaphor of the “anthills” as arrived at during the Achebe symposium are here rejected. This means then that we must look for firmer footings on which we can ground a more plausible reading of the metaphor of the “anthills of the savannah.”

It is possible that a more appropriate construal of this metaphor is to be found in a political context or reading of the novel. The first factor which lends credibility to this view is that the anthill as a phenomenon can be regarded as primarily a political symbol. In traditional Igbo societies, a popular riddle derives its being from the anthill. The riddle is as follows:

Question: Gwa m Gwa m Gwa m eze Chukwu kpubelu okpu na-oma agu.

(Tell me Tell me Tell me a King that is crowned by God in the Wilderness.)

Answer: Ikwube. (Anthill.)

From this, it can be said that in the traditional Igbo imagination, the anthill is ascribed with some naturally endowed power features, even if it be the power of surviving brush fires. The anthill too is a familiar feature of the savannah grassland. That it features as a constant image in many an Achebe novel is not quite surprising. Its resilience and ability to survive brush fires and its noticeably irresistible presence after such brush fires, coupled with its primal linkage with power in the folk imagination make it suggestive that an artist with such a keen sense of observation and sensitive imagination like Achebe may—consciously or unconsciously—begin to link its survival potential with the unusual tendency of political corruption to persist in West African states in spite of all attempts to eliminate it.

Secondly, *Anthills of the Savannah* is primarily a political novel. Consequently, any meaningful construal of its total meaning must centre around a political problematic. This makes it necessary for a true meaning of the metaphor of the “anthills of the savannah” to be sought within a political contextualization of the title of the novel especially if consideration is taken of the message which the titles of Achebe’s novels convey. “Things Fall Apart,” “No Longer at Ease,” and “Arrow of God” are, in this regard, some type of literary cryptograms.

But *Anthills of the Savannah* is quite unlike the ironic *A Man of the People*. In *A Man of the People*, we find the formulation of a problem, that of political corruption, which cannot be solved by the emergent intellectual elite because they lacked the means to do so and were selfishly motivated too. As such a solution is found in military intervention. Twenty-two years separates *A Man of the People* from *Anthills of the Savannah* a novel in which we find a graphic portrayal of the contemporary political situation in (Nigeria?) in a diachronic perspective. In this novel, the novelist abdicates the responsibility of offering solutions for the social problems of his society. Thus at the end of the address which Ikem gave to the students of the University of Bassa and in which he was challenged to "move to the higher responsibility of proffering prescriptions" for society's social problems, Ikem is made to reply. 'Writers don't give prescriptions.... They give headaches' (p.161). In other words, in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Chinua Achebe addresses himself to the task of setting in a historical perspective the political ills or problems which have plagued many a West African State. The choice of the title of the novel, may then have arisen in a conscious attempt by the novelist to create an image that best captures these problems from a historical perspective. These problems include "massive corruption," "subservience to foreign manipulation," "second-class, hand-me-down capitalism," "damnable shooting of striking railway workers and demonstrating students," "the destruction and banning thereafter of independent unions and cooperatives," "the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country" (p. 141), "tribalism," "religious extremism," "electoral merchandising" (p. 160), etc.

That these problems are looked at from a historical perspective is very obvious from the first two pages of the novel. Thus, the reminiscences of the first witness, Chris Oriko, the Commissioner for Information is, in itself, informative.

I have thought of all this as a game that began innocently enough and then went suddenly strange and poisonous. But I may prove to be too sanguine even in that. For, if I am right, then looking back on the last two years it should be possible to point to a specific and decisive event and say: it was at such and such a point that everything went wrong and the rules were suspended. But I have not found such a moment or such a cause although I have sought hard and long for it. And so it begins to seem to me that this thing probably never was a game that the present was there from the very beginning only I was too blind or too busy to notice. (pp.1-2)

The very easy phrase "And so" which introduces the last sentence in this passage indicates a conclusion, even if tentative, which focuses the scenario of action not only on the present military administration but also extends it far back into the past, into the "very beginning" of time. If so, the political problems facing the city of Kangan become not just indexical properties of an emergent totalitarian regime but also a recurrent character of the politics of West African states. Any wonder then that these political vices can begin to assume some type of residual and survivalist character in the imagination of the novelist. No fitting image can better become that of the "anthills of the savannah" in recapturing this essence.

With this type of understanding, the metaphor of "anthills of the savannah" can be said to represent the primal instincts of the Hobbesian man: raw, naked, and brutish and therefore giving rise to these residual and continuing political problems in (Nigeria?). After the brush fires, the anthills would stand out in their nakedness, having been pruned of all green grass and brush which both help to cover and beautify the anthills. Bereft of these naturally endowed appurtenances, the anthills cannot but look charred and ugly. Since these are the features which remain after they have been pruned of supportive surrounding beauty, they can be construed to be symbolic of residual political vices which continue to plague West African States in spite of whatever attempts that are made to eradicate them. The ants which survive within the anthills would then represent man's basic primal brutish instincts which would continue to produce more anthills, more political vices.

In conclusion then, it has to be re-stated this essay adopts a methodological approach which treats the "anthills of the savannah" as a metaphorical statement in preference to the perspective adopted at the Achebe symposium in which the words "anthills" and "savannah" were treated as different metaphors. The construal of the metaphorical meaning of "anthills" as either "survivors" or "indicators of potential regeneration" has also been rejected. We have then argued that "anthills of the savannah" as a metaphorical statement means residual political vices which tend to survive in many a West African state in spite of attempts to the contrary, this meaning construal is in agreement with both the general political nature of the novel and its problem setting framework undertaken from a historical perspective. This last point is underscored by Elewa's uncle, even if naively so. Thus in his kola invocation in the last few pages of the novel, he says: "We have seen too much trouble in Kangan since the white man left because those who make plans for themselves only and their families." (p. 228) If we then understand the metaphor of "anthills of the savannah" as meaning residual political vices in West African states in general and Nigeria in particular, the implication is that the leaders of West African states are like the anthills in the savannah: they would always be the same, manifesting the same selfishness, greed, and political bestiality no matter whether they are civilians or soldiers turned-politicians. Not even the brush fires given a purificatory signification can change them. They would always be like the anthills, like Kings crowned by God and behaving as such, unaccountable to no human, not even to God himself, and therefore unmindful of the consequences of their political acts.

## References

<sup>1</sup>A symposium to mark Chinua Achebe's both Birthday was held from 12th to 14th February, 1990, at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

<sup>2</sup>The scholar who first called attention to this problem was Professor Viney Kirpal.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Boyd, "Metaphor and Theory Change: What is 'Metaphor' for?" In *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; opt 1980), p. 362.

<sup>4</sup>Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958), p.78.

<sup>5</sup>Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 2nd Edition (London: Heinemann, 1974), pp. 265, and 210.

<sup>6</sup>Chinua Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Ltd, 1988) p. 39, all subsequent page references to this novel refer to this.

# Kant's Postulate of "Independence of Interest" and the Principle of Aesthetic Judgement in *The Critique of Judgement*.

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ARKADY J. NEDEL

(The problem of freedom in Kant's aesthetics)

## I. Formation of Aesthetic Thinking: Transcendental Freedom of the Subject

For many decades Kant's aesthetics has drawn the attention of philosophers and art critics of different schools and trends which resulted in a large amount of books and articles. The main merit of all these works is that they placed the aesthetic part of Kant's philosophy on the same level of importance as his epistemology *The Critique of Pure Reason* and the study of practical application of reason to the moral and the good, *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Among the authors to whom we owe the revival of interest in Kant's aesthetics one should mention Cohen, Dietrich, Menzer, who tried to prove Kant's competence in aesthetics and literature, V. Basch, a prominent French scholar, representative of the emphatic, theory<sup>1</sup> O. Schlapp, A. Nivelle, who studied the history of aesthetic thinking from, A. Baumgarten to Kant.<sup>2</sup> And more recent authors—F. Kaulbach, P. Heintel, G. Krämling, E. Schaper, A Russian philosopher V.F. Asums.<sup>3</sup>

Kant was interested in aesthetics long before the appearance of his main work which presented its author as an initiator of philosophical aesthetics. In 1764 Kant published an article "Beobachtung über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen". This aesthetic work demonstrated two things: first, Kant's desire to study and master the subject of the aesthetic; second, his sufficient knowledge of various literary trends.<sup>4</sup> Apparently, when writing the *Beobachtung* Kant fundamentally studied and thought over the history of aesthetic problems and first of all, in his country, in Germany.<sup>5</sup>

Kant did not conceive *The Critique of Judgement* as a work of art criticism: one of the main tasks of the Critique is to study conditions of existence of a subject's free aesthetic judgement, interrelationship of imagination and discourse. Kant supermised that for the feeling of pleasure and displeasure (by analogy with pure and practical reason) there should exist an a priori subjective principle of its own. The search for such an a priori principle should be made by the critique of taste. If we suppose, however, that Kant is right and the question to an a priori principle of aesthetic judgement if lawful, it is to the same degree as previously discovered transcendentalism in Kant's philosophy is topical, as well as its applicability to the subject's freedom. Besides, the search for an a priori aesthetic principle

puts the subject's phenomenal imagination in inverted commas, i.e., his ability to see goes to meet his ability express.

Kant's interest in philosophical aesthetics is connected with quite a legitimate desire of the author of *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of Practical Reason* to make his philosophical system complete. The author sees this completeness in the Critique aesthetic thinking, *The Critique of Judgement*.

Hoffmeister's "Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe" says that the word "judgement" (*Urteil*) from Kant onwards means a person's attitude. Really, if man makes aesthetic judgement, he directly or indirectly passes sentence to the object of beauty and to himself. The subject is within discourse.

One of the objectives of the third Critique is, first, to elucidate the ways of individual aesthetic thinking as the subject's autonomous and supra-logical thinking, second, to eliminate the dependence of aesthetic categories, which the subject uses when estimating the beautiful, from logical reflection about them. Thus, *The Critique of Judgement* aims at conditioning pure culture of the aesthetic.

It is possible to make a free choice, i.e., to make an aesthetic estimate, if the desire to perceive is more than the desire to apprehend. In the world of phenomenal representation of a thing the percipient and the precept are not in equal positions. It is always like that. The percipient has a chance to "make a mistake". The "mistake effect" lies heavily on the percipient, but for the aesthetic judgement to become a critical faculty the "mistake effect" should be removed. Then the subject which makes judgement receives freedom for himself which speaks of the subject as of a free percipient. If so, then the aesthetic position is determined by freedom of the act of judgement. Following Kant's logic one may surmise that the subject jumps from transcendental freedom to the phenomenal world (discovers for himself laws of freedom, a prior principles of which, according to Kant, are established by reason) thus having created a way of his own aesthetic perception of the world.

In chapter VIII "Von der Ästhetik des Beurteilungsvermögens" Kant wrote: "Das ästhetische Reflexionsvermögen urteilt also nur über subjective Zweckmässigkeit (nicht über Vollkommenheit) des Gogenstandes, und es fragt sich da, ob nur mittelst der dabei empfundenen Lust oder Unlust...."<sup>7</sup> The problem is to find out whether aesthetic judgement is immediately based only on the feeling of pleasure and displeasure and whether it may claim epistemological veracity, since this judgement "die keinen Begriff für die gegebene Anschauung bereit hat."<sup>8</sup> Kant answers this question as follows: "Ein ästhetische Urteil im Allgemeinen kann also für dasjenige Urteil erklärt werden, dessen Prädikat niemals Erkenntnis (Begriff von einem Objekte) sein kann (ob es gleich subjektive Bedingungen zu einer Erkenntnis überhaupt enthalten mag). In einem solchen Urteile ist der Bestimmungsgrund Empfindung."<sup>9</sup> Hence, it becomes clear that the task of cognizing and ascertaining objective truth is removed from the aesthetic judgement. The task of this judgement is to contemplate an object without studying its inner properties and principles of its creation. The main thing that constitutes the relation of a representation to the subject

but not to the object is an aesthetic property of this representation; it is rooted in the percipient. Kant stressed that a thing's purposefulness, since it is conceived in perception, is not a property of the object itself either. He defends the idea of aesthetic contemplation as the subject's disinterested presence in-itself and for-itself, as a sort of fiction. E. Schaper commented on this idea in her book: "to think and to speak aesthetically is to be aware of and articulate about the nature of some things as functions. It is to conceive of things in a special kind of bracket the 'as if.'"<sup>10</sup>

#### a) Aesthetic engagement

The French word "engagement" which due to J.P. Sartre has become a term means a voluntary drawing-in, desire to be personally involved. When contemplating an object of beauty the subject is drawn into his own speculative being and freedom, especially if he enjoys this contemplation. This drawing in is expressed in the judgement of taste. This phenomenally reveals man's existence on different levels of aesthetic perception of the world, where freedom has the same value as nature.

The cause of personal freedom of the percipient does not lie on the surface of the world perceived and thus, it is little comprehensible and sometimes it only seems to be an object of sensual givenness. In fact, interest in the cause of a person's freedom results in a different level of abstraction, in Kant's language this level is designated as transcendence.

In aesthetic transcendence a gap between natural laws and freedom is overcome. Kant writes about the problem of "great gap" in the last chapter of Introduction to *The Critique of Judgement*. But the contradiction may be felt only in a sense-created world in which aesthetic engagement is a sort of communication where the conceivable approaches the sensible.

## II. Critique of Taste and the Element of Discourse

Kant was not the first to put the task of determining originality of the aesthetic. A number of his predecessors: Reidel, Sulzer, Tetens, Mendelssohn tried to find the place and role of aesthetics among other branches of human knowledge. Many of them laid the foundation for Kant's philosophical aesthetics. In 1767 Riedel in his *Theory of Fine Arts* declared the existence of three independent faculties of the soul: "a universal feeling", "conscience", "taste" which correspond to truth, goodness, beauty.

Kant could not, of course, borrow the classification of "the three faculties of the soul" from his predecessor. He suggested a classification of his own in the famous letter to K.L. Reinhold in December 1787.<sup>11</sup> Here Kant was closer not to Riedel but to Mendelssohn who characterized the aesthetic feeling as the feeling of pleasure and displeasure,<sup>12</sup> but Kant and Mendelssohn fundamentally differ in their characteristic of the aesthetic. In his conception of "ability to approve" Mendelssohn does not pose the question of a "pure aesthetic feeling", about necessary presence of freedom in aesthetic judgement, i.e., about the limits of discourse and, finally, whether the judgement of taste is dependent of interest bound up with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.

In 2 "The delight which determines the judgement of taste is independent of all interest" Kant says "The delight which we connect with the representation of the real existence of an object is called interest. Such a delight, therefore, always involves a reference to the faculty of desire. Now, where the question is whether something is beautiful, we do not want to know, whether we, or any one else are, or even could be, concerned in the real existence of the thing, but rather what estimate we form of it on mere contemplation (intuition or reflection).<sup>13</sup> As we can see Kant insists that in the judgement of taste the beautiful be estimated regardless of the situation in which it would depend on the thing's utility or real existence. Thus, the being of the beautiful is not in the object's veracity, not in its existence but in real existence of the world of phenomena, where the beautiful is a beautiful phenomenon in the world setting the limits of its perception.

It is noteworthy that Kant pays attention to specific interrelationship between personal delight and its distinction from the pleasant and the good. The beautiful, the pleasant and the good mean, for Kant, three different correlations of representation with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. Of all three kinds of delight in different aesthetic "rows" only delight in contemplation of the beautiful is disinterested and free delight.

The judgment of taste, if it is disinterested, is free aesthetic judgement, such judgement are connected with each other in a special way, i.e., they do not form the structure of knowledge about the object, they are but a system of description of "the secondary" with respect to the thing itself. Description hides the thing, its real existence is substituted by the subject's imagination who makes judgement and by doing it sends other people to the objection of his own imagination, where the judgement of taste makes a forgery".

In aesthetic universe at the level of perception of aesthetic values a person who makes an act of judgement "A" practically equals his imagination "I". But imagination is circumscribed by the force of discourse in which the subject feels independent of all interest. Interest is hidden beyond the discourse, there is not a hint at it.\*

Possibility of the judgement of taste a priori presupposes the existence of a certain universal meaning which is represented by a universal feeling. The universal feeling (*sensus communis*) presupposes in the judgement of taste the subject's claim to general validity which undermines the autonomy of feeling but at the same time couples subjective imagination with other people's. Kant noted that when complete independence of all interest is realized, the judgement of taste should claim validity for everyone but without universality directed to objects.

If everyone can possess taste then there appears the problem of universal communication of aesthetic judgement based on disinterested judgement of taste. When the subject estimates the object (which he may like or dislike) he feels at ease, his proposition

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\*Discourse here should not be viewed as the discourse of a text and its poetic means but as an abstract figure of speech, judgement beyond which there are different levels of perception of the object of beauty, i.e. discourse in the aesthetic sense.



of the object is based not on ontological interest to penetrate into the realm of sense but not on the ontological interest to penetrate into the realm sense but on the phenomenal presence of the aesthetic which gives him genuine feeling of delight. This allows to suppose that other people will share a personal estimate, for they have the same freedom and claim to general validity as an individual. And again Kant points out: objective general validity—logical judgement based on a concept—and subjective (aesthetic) general validity based only on the subject's feeling, are practically irreducible to one another.

That is why aesthetic general validity should be of a special kind: it makes phenomenal aesthetic world totally autonomous within the limits of the being of the beautiful, this autonomy being kept by immanent existence of freedom as a matrix, of feeling, understanding and reason.

It is evident that the critique of taste couples in Kant's philosophy with the critique of pure and practical reason where critique is transcendental matrix of philosophy in which the problem of finding a prior principles is more acute the problem of experience.

Universal communicability of aesthetic judgement rests not upon an objective concept (of a purpose) of the object's existence but on the play of imagination and the understanding which urges on the subject aesthetic choice-estimate. The nature of such a free play of imagination and the understanding is transcendental in respect to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure in contemplating the object of beauty in which the subject keeps his feeling. One could say that in this play reason acts as imagination.

Probably the depth of aesthetic feeling to which Kant pays attention lies in a still undiscovered phenomenon of freedom where mystery is a way of a feeling's is-ness mirrored in a moral symbol. The world of aesthetic phenomenality resists the world of ontological interest, effect eliminates cause. Speaking about opposition, logical judgement is more comprehensible than aesthetic one because the latter is not a way of comprehending things.

### **III. Phenomenalization of the Aesthetic: Levels of Perception**

Outside of rigid limits of concepts aesthetic thinking cannot be a subject of a logical paradigm. The fundamental characteristic of aesthetic thinking is its dissolution in an object where an object itself is but a semblance and a subject of aesthetic thinking is aesthetic thinking itself.

#### **a) The judgement of taste's claim to general validity: originality of aesthetic judgement**

Kant considered the judgement of taste original and mysterious. This judgement, being significant for the subject, claims general validity. Transcendental freedom requested by the subject is sublimated into the phenomenal realm of perceived aesthetic objects where personal perception becomes horizontally ambivalent, i.e., aesthetic judgement of "one person" becomes valid for "another". When the judgement of taste is made the subject divides, he opens the world of his aesthetic sensuality and the latter, as a result, becomes metasubjective.

According to Kant the essence of the judgement of taste, its in-itself-and-for-itself significance should be studied through deduction of pure aesthetic judgements. This deduction will find out the specificity of the aesthetic and the pleasant, relationship between subjective and objective principles, compatibility of man's feeling and understanding.

In § 36. "On deduction of judgements of taste" Kant writes: "It is easy to see that judgements of taste are authentic, for they go beyond the concept and even the intuition of the Object... The problem of *The Critique of Judgement*, therefore, is part of the general problem of transcendental philosophy; how are synthetic a priori judgements possible?"<sup>14</sup> By posing this question Kant unambiguously stated the existence of transcendental problems in aesthetics due to which aesthetics is within the sphere of his philosophical criticism.

Kant thinks that general validity of the feeling of delight in the object of beauty is good ground of the search for a priori foundations of a synthetic judgement. However, it is a priori impossible to bind a feeling with a representation, i.e., Kant holds that the realm of aesthetic phenomena cannot be grasped by a priori means. For the subject to be able to unite feeling and representation and communicate it to another subject he must turn to the object of beauty, become a subject in the process of phenomenalization of aesthetic objects, to resist the pressure of the medium. The structure of the medium is as follows:

- |                                  |                       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| a) object-feeling-representation | medium of distinction |
| b) object-representation-feeling |                       |

Kant discovers two kinds of aesthetic judgements: First, an empirical judgement—"a judgement to the effect that it is with pleasure that I perceive and estimate some object is an empirical judgement;" second, an a priori one—"but if it asserts that I think the object beautiful, i.e., that I may attribute that delight to every one as necessary, it is then an a priori judgement."<sup>15</sup> According to our scheme an empirical judgement corresponds to the level "a", the second a priori judgement—to the level "b". At both levels the subject is in the medium of distinction (J. Derrida\* designated it as difference"), i.e., it is circumscribed by aesthetic discourse. The second condition can be satisfied only in case of absolute disinterest in real existence of the object of beauty's thing-ness. Otherwise the object's thing-ness will hinder phenomenal freedom of the beautiful which is to be contemplated by man.

What makes Kant a rationalist in aesthetics—acceptance of an a priori ground of general validity of aesthetic delight—is not rationalism or a priorism. It is too common an opinion. I would rather call it aesthetic transcendentalism which in Kant's philosophy is pre-supposed as necessary for artistic taste and artistic creation.

Beauty cannot be objective, it is but a way of being's existence a means for its subjective discovery, that is why deduction of the judgement of taste is rather easy, as Kant points out: "What makes this Deduction so easy is that it is spared the necessity of having to justify the objective reality of a concept. For beauty is not a concept of the object, and the judgement of taste is not a cognitive judgement."<sup>16</sup>

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\*Derrida J. Die Differance // Randgänge der Philosophie. Frankfurt a.M. etc., 1976, S-6-37.

Winkelman said that beauty is one of Nature's great mysteries whose action we see and feel but to give a clear universal concept of its essence is one of unattainable truths. Winkelman is right. Kant does not seek to give a clear and universal concept of beauty. His each definition of beauty has a negative shade. Kant thinks that there are two kinds of beauty: "pure" (*pulchritudo vaga*) and conditioned beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*). The first does not presuppose any concept of the object, means autonomously existing and creative beauty—luminescence in nature, the second—presupposes the concept of the object's perfection, it is ascribed to objects to which the concept of a purpose can be applied. A waterfall is pure natural beauty, while the beauty of a bride's dress is dependent (conditioned) beauty as it is related to the concept of a purpose. According to this division of beauty Kant defines for each the judgement of taste of its own: if the subject speaks of pure beauty he makes pure judgement of taste, if he speaks of conditioned beauty—an applied judgement of taste.

In the world of phenomena the two kinds of beauty overlap in the subject's sensibility and make a complex representation of beauty but these very kinds of beauty are divided by two kinds of judgements—pure and applied ones—and this testifies to the work of discourse in Kant's aesthetics—interrelationship of reason and feeling within the framework for conformity-non-conformity.

Pure beauty can exist only in its own absolute autonomy in respect to man. Absolute autonomy is a sign of beauty's external freedom. As for internal freedom it can be attained only when the subject contemplates the object of beauty, when communication of the world of aesthetic phenomena is created. That is why we say that the beautiful is not just the object of beautiful creation placed into the medium of perception, but a process of creation of the beautiful creation of creation. The process of creation of the beautiful (including the process of its contemplation) means an active presence of the percipient in which the three freedom of the percipient himself from conceptual-logical understanding of the being of the beautiful is expressed.

M. Heidegger said about the sense of artistic creation: "Das Kunstwerk eröffnet in seiner Weise das Sein des Seienden. Im Werk geschieht diese Eröffnung, d.h. das Entbergen, d.h. die Wahrheit des Seienden. Im Kunstwerk hat sich die Wahrheit des Seienden ins Werk gesetzt."<sup>17</sup> "Its own way" in which, in Heidegger's aesthetics, artistic creation reveals variety of the being is a way of freedom of being itself which it draws out of the beautiful.

Strictly speaking, there are only two conditions of genuine contemplation of the beautiful: first, autonomy of the beautiful and, consequently, its freedom, second, tranquility, i.e., supra-empirical state of the soul, which Winkelman was the first to point out. According to R. Meerbout, Kant's theory of aesthetics is of great interest for those who want to understand the significance of the conception of free regularity of a cognizing subject's autonomous activity.

The complete and complicated existence of the being cannot be adequately reflected

in concepts which in this way or another fulfill their function of a reference of the manifold to a definite end. The concept is the constant setting of limits and, consequently, the dulling of infinitely manifold activity of subjective sensuality. The whole existence of being can be grasped only by the subject's aesthetic thinking, thinking of the beautiful as an image of being.<sup>18</sup> That is why one can state the following: first, the beautiful is the subject's total autonomy, which represents his aesthetic perception's activity on different levels in the medium of distinction. This testifies to the possibility of free subjective choice of the object of beauty and a means of describing it. Kant always remembered that freedom is the symbol of morality. Second, the being of the beautiful is a limit of the existence of entity, for outside the beautiful the movement of entity is constantly fixed by the concept which puts a limit to the freedom of aesthetic judgement of a person without whom all aesthetic judgement has not sense.

#### **b) On the transposition of aesthetic discourse**

Levels of aesthetic perception introduce the subject into the transposition of discourse. The judgement of taste which Kant spoke about consists of the following aesthetic-discursive models: the first model: an act of judgement where the subject makes a proposition about his attitude to the object, for example, "I like this picture"; the second model: a judgement in which the subject speaks of the object's artistic value. "This picture is beautiful". The subjective judgement of taste includes both these models: "I like this picture (1) that is why it is beautiful (2)."

At different stages of perception aesthetic-discursive models may change places, accordingly vary both an a priori and empirical position of the subject in the judgement of taste, but in both positions the content of the first and the second models is necessary without this the judgement of taste will be incomplete. Thus, if Kant poses the question with an explicitly transcendental shade: whether the feeling of delight precedes the judgement of taste, it is necessary, when answering it, to introduce what we shall call "perception level factor" with a correction for the medium.

In *The Critique of Judgement*, analyzing the subject's attitude to the object of beauty Kant arrives at the conclusion that freedom is not only an object of reason but also an object of sensibility circumscribed by discourse an expressed through transitive aesthetic judgement.

#### **IV. On Actuality of Aesthetic Judgement: Towards the Supersensible.**

In § 23. "Transition from the faculty of estimating the beautiful to that of estimating the sublime" of the *Analytic of the Sublime* Kant points out the essential difference between the judgement of the beautiful and the judgement of the sublime. "We observe, writes Kant, that whereas natural beauty (such as it self-subsisting) conveys a finality in its form making the object appear (as it were)...but, simply in our apprehension of it, excites the feeling of the sublime, may appear, indeed, in point of form to contravene the ends of our power of judgement."<sup>19</sup> A formless object presupposes uncertainty but the difference between

uncertainty of the beautiful and that of the sublime is that the former is used to picture an uncertain concept of the understanding involved in the free play with imagination, the latter—to picture an uncertain concept of reason. In the judgement of the sublime the soul is in internal dialectic contradiction, the object both attracts and repels it, thus, satisfaction in the sublime contains respect rather than positive delight, i.e., is rightly called negative delight.

The main internal difference between the aesthetic judgement of the beautiful and that of the sublime is that human imagination perceives the object of beauty according to phenomenalization of its form. Satisfaction received is a result of harmony between aesthetic judgement and the object of beauty perceived, due to which the object seems prepared beforehand for our judgement.

The aesthetic judgement of the sublime is different. The object of the sublime cannot be practically inscribed into ordinary tranquil imagination and, so it will never become an image. The sublime is more difficult to be subject to discourse, one should search other levels of perception in another medium of distinction which is a special task of transcendental aesthetics. The judgement of the sublime demands greater effort, one cannot contemplate it through external senses or greater effort, one should be within. To be within the sublime means for the subject to feel not a phenomenal presence of freedom but its illusion which differs from contemplating the object of beauty. The subject is unable to establish for-himself limits of re-presentation of the sublime, for sublimation of the sublime as entity, i.e., its original nature is endless non-concealment—*akruptos* (*a-cruptos*), so far as this Greek word can express it as the beginning of tradition. Non-concealment of the raging elements in which man feels lonely and lost.

Kant maintained that we should seek ground of the beautiful outside of ourselves, whereas that of the sublime—in ourselves and in our ideas.

To judge the sublime the soul should find in itself the ground of the appearance of the sublime, i.e., the soul's movement should acquire features of actual-infinite movement of man's spiritual forces, who stands in a sensual flow, between reality the transcendence.

a) antinomies of aesthetic judgement.

The judgement of taste is based on an antinomy which Kant defines as follows:

1. Thesis. The judgement of taste does not rest on concepts, otherwise it would be subject to dispute (decision through proofs.).
2. Antithesis. The judgement of taste rests on concepts otherwise, despite their difference, one should not even argue about it (claim its general validity, the necessity of the opponent's complying with it).

Kant seeks a compromise here. He sees it in that the concept which is related to the object in this type of judgement should be understood equivocally in both maxims of the aesthetic judgement. Kant holds that the judgement of taste should belong to a concept

whatever be it, otherwise its claim to general validity is strange. Kant points out that “antinomies make us look beyond the sensible against our will and seek a priori a common point for all our faculties in the suprasensible.”<sup>20</sup>

Kant's intuition did not deceive him when prompted him to seek a common point for all our faculties in the idea of the supra-sensible as the only clue to these meanings whose sources of transcendence are hidden from us, where nothing can make them comprehensible and intelligible. In aesthetic realm the judgement of taste always strives to approach transcendence to understand it as a cause of itself and, moreover, to be consistent in its endless revelation of human sensibility.

## **V. Mysteries and Harmonies of Genius.**

A genius needs freedom more than other people. According to Kant, Nature sets rules to art through genius' free creative work. That is why true art is a creation not only of genius but if its two co-authors, nature and freedom. Kant's demands to genius are as follows:

1. It is the faculty of bringing forth something for which there are no specific rules, 2. its originality must be exemplary, 3. a genius cannot explain to others how his creation came into being, 4. through a genius Nature sets a rule not to science, but to art.

Genius in science and art is given immediately by Nature, it may die with a human being and genius is hidden in the chaos of being until Nature gives it to someone else. The appearance of genius cannot be explained rationally, it is an act of divine will, activation of dark forces of Nature and free spirit which out of chaos attract order as a genius implemented creative work. Apparently, genius is actualized in art and through art it 'arts' nature and the world where it finds transcendental order of things and human experience and binds up together Nature and freedom.

A genius is Nature's disciple. Through his creative work he can establish 'aesthetic horizon' as A. Nivelle put it. Horizon is a limit of phenomenal freedom of every artistic creation—a limit of any imitation of perfect works of art. Besides, a genius founds his school attracting most talented pupils and followers who could apprehend their teacher's ideas on condition that Nature provided them with the same faculties of the soul.

Genius as author of the beautiful in art, i.e., beautiful representation of a thing, strives for aesthetic significance of his soul—totality of creation that will expand in the world. For Kant it is important to emphasize transcendental character of genius' activities in respect to the play of imagination and the understanding which would enter into Kant's philosophical aesthetics. Genius is such because he creates order out of chaos, though his creation does not increase order but in order hides chaos, strengthening the latter's power in the world. Thus is revealed the freedom of genius as an agent of transcendence in the world where Nature and freedom are bound up in mysterious of artistic creation.

Other things are important too. Kant considers spirit a life-giving principle of genius' creative soul and the way in which it gives life to creative soul is a free play of spiritual

forces, soul's movement in creation; such movement is capable of representing aesthetic ideas that cannot be expressed by language, they are encoded ideas of genius' creation—ideas of individual freedom. No wonder that such ideas can be apprehended only by free imagination of man who uses natural substance to construct something quite different from natural and considerably superior to it—man's superiority over Nature is expressed in freedom as a true source of artistic creation, the freedom that does not exist in natural universe.

André Lemoyne gave a happy expression of the essence of genius in his marvelous poem entitled "Beethoven at Rembrandt". Here are a few lines by which we shall conclude:

A Charles Blanc

Beethoven et Rembrandt, tous deux nés sur le Rhin,  
Dans leur mystérieuse et profonde harmonie,  
Vibrent d' accord. —Un sombre et lumineux Génie.  
Leur a touché le front de son doigt souverain.

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<sup>4</sup> O. Schlapp, P. Menzer, *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> "Briefwechsel von Imm. Kant" in drei Bänden, hgg. Von H.E. Fischer, Erster Band, München, 1912.

<sup>6</sup> J. Hoffmeister, *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe*, Hamburg, 1955.

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant's Werke, Herausgegeben von Ernst Cassirer, Bd. 5, Berlin, 1914, S. 209.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, S. 204.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, S. 204.

<sup>10</sup> E. Schaper, *Studies in Kant's aesthetics*, Edinburgh, 1979, p. 119-120.

<sup>11</sup> "Briefwechsel von Imm. Kant," in drei Bänden, hsg. Von H.E. Fischer, Erster Band, München, 1912, S. 369.

<sup>12</sup> M. Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden*, II.

<sup>13</sup> Imm. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, Oxford, 1952, p. 42-43.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 145.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>17</sup> M. Heidegger, *Holzwege*, Frankfurt a. Main, 1957, S. 28.

<sup>18</sup> V. Gerhardt, F. Kaulbach, *Kant*, Darmstadt, 1979.

<sup>19</sup> Imm. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, Oxford, 1952, p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> Imm. Kant, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 5, Berlin, 1908, S. 417-418.

# Kleist's "On the Puppet Theater": Wisdom from a Taoist Perspective

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MARTIN WASSERMAN

Heinrich von Kleist, the nineteenth-century German writer, is best known for his plays, such as *Robert Guiscard* and *The Prince of Homburg*, and his short stories, like *Michael Kohlhaas* and *The Earthquake in Chile*. However, Kleist's plays and short stories do not provide a definitive statement of his philosophical point of view. It is only when one reads Kleist's essay, "On the Puppet Theater," which Thomas Mann has described as "a brilliant piece of philosophical discourse," that a clearer view of Kleist's philosophy begins to emerge.<sup>1</sup> Speaking of this work, which was written in 1810, the noted writer, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, boasted that "no one...has produced so pretty a piece of philosophy, so sparkling with intelligence and charm, as Kleist's essay on marionettes."<sup>2</sup>

A recent analysis of "On the Puppet Theater" claimed that the essay fell squarely "within the context of Occidental philosophical thought."<sup>3</sup> Although I do not deny that Kleist's philosophical perspective shares a good deal in common with classic Western thought, it is my contention that one can find even more elements from the Eastern philosophical tradition in "On the Puppet Theater." I believe that Kleist's essay is replete with ideas which can be found readily in Taoist philosophy, but not in the intellectual heritage of the West. My goal, then, is to demonstrate that the unique viewpoint conveyed by Taoist works, such as the *Tao Te Ching*, the *Chuang Tzu*, and the *Lieh Tzu*, is the same as that articulated by Kleist in "On the Puppet Theater".

In the Kleist essay, a conversation takes place between two persons – Mr. C., a dancer, and Kleist himself.<sup>4</sup> At first, Kleist is confused and skeptical when Mr. C. favourably compares the physical skill of a marionette controlled by mechanical crank to that of a professional dancer. However, as the dialogue progresses, Kleist soon arrives at the same point of view as Mr. C. Their shared conviction is that dancers are inferior to marionettes because humans possess self-consciousness and vanity which are barriers to both physical grace and spiritual harmony.

For Kleist and Mr. C., every involuntary movement is beautiful, while any action involving reflection or reason is distorted. Since only a human is capable of reflective thought, they believe a dancer can never be the equal of a puppet. Thus Kleist, in his essay, regards spontaneity as being of supreme importance.

Taoism holds the same view as Kleist on the great importance of spontaneity. For the Taoist, one must always reflect things like a mirror, and react to them like an echo,



without resorting to any intermediate thought. In both the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Lieh Tzu*, the flawless performance is said to occur only when one, similar to the puppet, has done something without really knowing how it has been done.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. C. manages to convince Kleist in their dialogue that the puppet's spontaneity saves it from affectation which all professional dancers possess. By affection, Mr. C. means being concerned about the effect which one's performance has on others. He argues that affectation lends to a type of gracelessness which makes it possible for professional dancers to hurt themselves. Giving a specific examples, Mr. C. mentions a calculated ballet maneuver by Madame P. where the performer's "soul settles in the vertebrae of the small of her back; she bends over as though about to break in two."<sup>6</sup>

Taoism also believes that it is affectation which brings about bodily harm. For the Taoist, when one starts thinking about the effect produced upon others, it is only then that one acts without self-assurance and harm can come one's way. Commenting on human perfection, the *Chuang Tzu* states that it is acting "like a mirror, going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding but not storing."<sup>7</sup> By doing so, it makes it possible for one to be like the puppet and "win out over all things," yet not hurt oneself.<sup>8</sup>

In adopting Mr. C.'s philosophical position, Kleist declares that the only time human beings can achieve the high physical grace of a mechanically controlled puppet is when they find themselves in a state of innocence or naivete. On this issue, Kleist tells Mr. C. of a youth he had known who, on his first attempt, was able to assume the exact same pose as the "famous statue called the Spinario, the youth removing a thorn from his foot."<sup>9</sup> However, on successive tries, the adolescent was not able to duplicate his initial pose since he had become self-conscious of his every movement.

For the Taoist, a great emphasis is also placed upon naivete as a way to achieve perfection. On this matter, the *Tao Te Ching* asserts:

In non-action nothing remains not done.

The realm can only be attained  
if one remains free of busy-ness.

The busy are not fit

To attain the realm.<sup>10</sup>

By non-action, the Taoist does not have in mind idleness or inertia, but a total receptiveness to the fundamental laws of the universe. This total receptiveness comes naturally to the naïve, for, like the marionette, they possess a "consciousness on which no impression has been notched."<sup>11</sup>

Kleist's "On the Puppet Theater," by extolling the qualities of spontaneity and naivete, was certainly not rebelling against Western Philosophical tradition. After all, Rousseau had made similar claims in his writings. What distinguished Kleist from other Western thinkers, however, was that perhaps he alone supported the notion that a mechanically controlled marionette, being both spontaneous and naïve, deserved to be put on a higher

physical plane than a human being. One simply does not find this notion in pre nineteenth-century Western philosophical writing.

On the other hand, there does exist in Taoist writing the idea that a machine is of a higher cosmic order than an ordinary human being. As stated previously, the Taoist believes that there ought not to be a sense of self-consciousness which prevents our actions from achieving perfection. It therefore follows that a marionette run by a mindless machine will fit this guideline exactly, since it makes all of its movements without a concomitant sense of self-awareness. Indeed, the *Lieh Tzu* supports this very notion when it says:

The highest man at rest is as though dead, in movement is like a machine. He knows neither why he is at rest nor why he is not, why he is in movement nor why he is not. He neither changes his feelings and expression because ordinary people are watching nor fails to change them because ordinary people are not watching.<sup>12</sup>

Near the end of "On the Puppet Theater," Mr. C. summarizes the philosophical position held by Kleist and himself. He declares, "Grace ... appears most purely in that bodily form that has either no consciousness at all or an infinite one, which is to say either in a puppet or a god."<sup>13</sup>

The view that a thing, like a puppet, could be elevated to the same spiritual level as a god was absolutely alien to pre nineteenth-century Western thinkers. Immanuel Kant, whom many people consider to be the greatest of modern philosophers, typified the Western attitude when he said of such a notion that it was "monstrous," and that it represented "misbehaviour" because "nothingness, truly conceived, is a concept which annihilates all understanding and in which thought itself arrives at its end."<sup>14</sup>

It was only in Kleist's "On the Puppet Theater" and in the philosophy of Taoism that the "not-being" endowed with religious sanctity, could reach such a godly stature. By this I mean the Taoist, similar to Kleist, argues that while an ordinary human being is a mechanism without a spirit inside of it; a thing, because it achieves the perfection of the Divine, must necessarily have an internal spirit controlling it. Commenting on the inherent godliness of things, the Taoist sage, Chuang Chan (4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), declared:

The achievements of Creation are extremely subtle, so that all the myriad varieties of things are developed, and their activities are boundless.... How can it mean that a thing does not have a spirit controlling it? This is very much mistaken.<sup>15</sup>

Hopefully, I have now demonstrated the strong overlap that has existed – but at the same time has been ignored – between the Kleistian philosophy of "On the Puppet Theater" and the philosophical writings of Taoism.<sup>16</sup> In comparing these two viewpoints, I believe appropriate evidence has been provided to support my thesis that Kleist's conception of things really falls more within the context of Eastern philosophy than within the Occidental framework.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Mann, "Kleist and his Stories," in *The Marquise of O – and Other Stories*, trans. and ed., Martin Greenberg (New York: New American Library, 1962), p.x.

<sup>2</sup> Joachim Maass, *Kleist: A Biography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1983), p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> Rudiger Bubner, "Philosophisches "uber Marionetten," *Kleist-Jahrbuch* (1980), PP. 73-85.

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich von Kleist, "On the Puppet Theater" in *An Abyss Deep Enough*, trans. and ed., Phillip B. Miller (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1982), pp. 211-216. Kleist first published this article, as "Über das Marionettentheater", in the newspaper, *Berliner Abendblätter*, from December 12 to 15, 1810.

<sup>5</sup> Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 204-206; and A.C. Graham, trans., *The Book of Lieh Tzu* (London: John Murray, 1960), pp. 43-44.

<sup>6</sup> Kleist, p. 213.

<sup>7</sup> Watson, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> Watson, p. 97

<sup>9</sup> Kleist, p.215

<sup>10</sup> Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans., Richard Wilhelm and H.G. Ostwald (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 48.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur Waley, *The Way and its Power* (New ork ; Grove press, 1958), p.55,

<sup>12</sup> Graham, p. 130

<sup>13</sup> Kleist, p. 216.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Kroner, *Kant's Weltanschauung*, trans., John E. Smith (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 16. This quote of Kant's originally appeared in "Das Ende aller Dinge," (1794). Kant, of course, never read Kleist's essay, since he died six years before it was published. He was merely commenting on the foolishness of Eastern religious systems which equated nothingness with goodness.

<sup>15</sup> Graham, pp. 111-112.

<sup>16</sup> The missionaries' translations of Taoist works would have been available to Kleist, as they were to Kant before him (see Julia Ching, "Chinese Ethics and Kant, *Philosophy East and West*, XXVIII (1978), p. 168). However, Kleist does not give any indication in his letters that he was directly influenced by Taoist thought. Unfortunately, Kleist burned most of his autobiographical material just before he committed suicide on November 21, 1811, at the age of thirty-five.

Prof. of Psychology and Anthropology,  
Adirondack Community College,  
State University of New York,  
Glens Falls, New York 12801 U.S.A.

# A Monument more Lasting than Bronze ?

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WILLIAM GERBER

The Roman poet Horace proclaimed, "I have made me a monument more lasting than bronze" (*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*), as a consequence of which, he went on to say, 'I shall not wholly die' (*Non omnis moriar*). Horace, however, was not alone among poets in predicting evergreen life for his literary output. From classical times through Ronsard, Spenser, and Shakespeare, and on to Archibald MacLeish and other versifiers of the twentieth century, *many* poets have confidently said that their works would be read and enjoyed long after they themselves had ceased to live.

Were they right in their expectation of lasting glory? Surely, some of them were right, including those whom I just mentioned as examples. For you would not have recognized the names of these poets if the memory of them and their work had not lasted until today. Others, however, who made such forecasts about themselves and their work were unfortunately not right, since not all who deemed themselves worthy of literary immortality actually achieved it.

I am going to present, in this paper, a variety of proclamations such as Horace's, and let you, the reader, judge the extent to which the authors thereof were reliable in their anticipation of everlasting fame. If you recognize some of these authors as indeed eminent writers, attracting and uplifting readers even today, then your conclusion will be that *their* self-judgements of immortality were accurate. It should not be surprising, however, if, in other cases, you will not recognize the names of poets mentioned here, and you conclude that *their* self-judgements of immortality were flawed.

Several of my illustrative passages, you will observe, reflect not a prediction about a poet's *own* work but instead a paean to the abiding life of *another* poet's writings—or else a somber prediction that the other poet was *not* destined to achieve immortal fame.

## Ancient Egypt

1. An anonymous Egyptian master, in a document entitled "Praise of Learned Scribes", predicted long life for the writings not of himself but of certain members of his trade. He declared: "They did not make for themselves pyramids of metal, ... [b]ut their names are still pronounced because of their books... ; and the memory of ... [them] lasts to eternity"

There may be other pronouncements of this kind among the remains of ancient Egyptian literature, but the one that I have quoted stands out, I think, as phrased in especially charming and elegant language.

## Greek Period

Of the six Greek authors who I shall quote on the idea of leaving a monument more lasting than bronze, each one discussed not the fate of his or her *own* poems but instead the chances for fame of the writings of someone else.

2. Our first example from Greek literature comes from Sappho of Lesbos. Her poem to be cited here is a warning to a female poet of her own time that poets's writings, since they lacked inspiration and polish, were *not* destined to enjoy everlasting life.

Here are three English versions of Sappho's warning to her ill-fated contemporary, who apparently did not pay enough attention to her art. Each version reflects special view of the translator's craft.

- (a) Dead shalt thou lie for ever, and forgotten,  
For whom the flowers of song have never bloomed;  
A wanderer amidst the unbegotten,  
In Hades' house a shadow by entombed.

—Translated by H. De Vere Stackpole

- (b) When dead, thou shalt in ashes lie,  
Nor live in human memory:  
Nor any page in time to come  
Shall draw thee from thy shrouding tomb.  
For thou didst never pluck the rose  
That on Pieria's mountain grows:  
Dim and unseen thy feet shall tread  
The shadowy mansions of the dead.

—Translated by Charles A. Elton

- (c) You have no time for poetry?  
My dear, I doubt it not.  
Yet think - when you are dead you'll lie  
Unwanted and forgot;

And as in this your earthly home  
You're never in the swim,  
You'll wander in the world to come  
With spirits just as dim.

—Translated by Janet M. Todd

About four centuries after Sappho's time, we find an additional comment on the likelihood or unlikelihood of survival to posterity of the writings of *another* poet. This time, by contrast with what Sappho had said about *her* contemporary, the prediction about the future life of the writings of the other poet is favourable.

3. The predictor this time is Callimachus, who asserted that the “nightingales” (verses) of his deceased friend and fellow poet Heraclitus *would* remain alive, and would be heard and enjoyed by future generations. (This Heraclitus is not the well-known philosopher.) As in the case of Sappho’s *negative* conclusion, I present you with three translations of Callimachus’s *favourable* prediction.

- (a) They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,  
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.  
I wept as I remembered how often you and I  
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,  
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,  
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales awake;  
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

—Translated by William J. Cory

In the next translation, the reference is not to “my dear old Carian guest” but to “my Halicarnassian guest.” Halicarnassus was the capital of the district of Caria, in Asia Minor.

- (b) I wept, my Heraclitus, when they told  
That thou wert dead; I thought of days of old, —  
How oft in talk we sent the sun to rest:  
Long since hast thou, my Halicarnassian guest,  
Been dust: yet live thy nightingales—on these  
The all-plundering hand of death shall never seize.”

—Translated by William Hay

In the third translation which I am offering, the reference is not to nightingales (standing for poems) but to Philomel, who was a mythological nightingale.

- (c) I hear, O friend, the fatal news  
Of Heraclitus’ death.  
A sudden tear my cheek bedews  
And sighs suppress my breath.  
For I must often call to mind  
How from the crowd we [’d] run;  
And how, to jesting still inclined,  
We sported in the sun.

Alas! He’s gone, and part we must  
And repartee’s no more;  
But, though my friend be sunk in dust,  
His *muse* shall ever soar.

The dart of death shall never fly  
To stop *her* waving wings:  
Like Philomel, she mounts on high,  
And still, like her, she sings.

—Translated by H.W. Tyler

4. About a century after Callimachus died, a Stoic philosopher-poet whose name was Antipater followed the already well-established practice of composing lines about the everlasting literacy monument of *another* writer. Antipater admiringly addressed his lines of this kind to a long-dead poetess, Erinna, who had been a contemporary of Sappho. Antipater wrote :

Few were thy words, Erinna, short thy lay,  
But thy short lay the *Must* herself had given:  
Thus never shall thy memory decay,  
Nor night obscure thy fame, which lives in heav'n.

—Translated by John H. Merivale

5. Next, we hear from Posidippus, a verse dramatist of approximately the same era as Antipater. While Antipater wrote about Sappho's contemporary Erinna, Posidippus offered a prediction about Sappho herself. What Posidippus predicted is that Sappho's poem about an Egyptian girl named Doricha, of the town of Naucratis, would cause Doricha to live in the minds of readers as long as ships shall sail the Nile. Thus, this poem expressed the idea, often imitated by later writers, that a cited poem would live as long as *the culture in which it was written* would remain alive and vibrant. Posidippus's poem reads, in part:

But Sappho, and the white leaves of her song,  
Will make your name a word for all to learn,  
And all to love thereafter, even while  
It's but a name; and this will be as long  
As there are distant ships that will return  
Again to your Naucratis and the Nile.

—Translated by Edwin Arlington Robinson

6. Not long after Posidippus's time, a poet of whom we know only his name—Philip—predicted eternal fame for Homer's epics (written several centuries earlier), as follows:

Sooner shall heaven put out its starry light,  
The sun, with noon-day splendour deck the night;  
Sooner the salt-sea taste, like fountains, sweet,  
Or to the living turn the dead their feet,  
Than shall oblivion seize on Homer's name  
And of the page of old destroy the fame.

—Translated by George Burges

In this accolade, Philip predicted that Homer would be read not as long as the culture of the area survived (as in Posidippus's similitude), but as long as the *modus operandi* of earth and heaven (e.g., the sun shining only during the day) remained constant; that is, as long as the world survived.

7. My last illustration from ancient Greece comes from the poetess Nossis, who lived in a Greek colony in southern Italy. Nossis celebrated the writings of the verse dramatist Rhinthon by composing the following epitaph for him, predicting that the crown he had won would endure forever:

Pass by and wish me well,  
Smile and be not afraid;  
Within this narrow cell  
Rhinthon is laid.

A humble bird of song,  
A mimic playwright gay:  
But yet the crown I won  
Abides always.

—Translated by F.A. Wright

## Roman Period

Seven Roman poets sang serenely of the fame of their *own* output (not merely the output of others) that would surely, they thought, outlive them. These seven are Ennius, in the early period; Virgil and Ovid, writers of long poems; Catullus, Propertius, and Horace among those best known for shorter pieces; and the epigram-writer Martial.

8. Quintus Ennius, who flourished about two centuries before the sparkling literary age of the Emperor Augustus, wrote:

Let none with tears *my* funeral grace, for *I*  
Claim for my works an immortality.

—Translated by C.D. Yonge

9. In Virgil's epic, its hero Aeneas praised Queen Dido as a glorious monarch whose reputation for virtue would be unending. Why would her reputation be unending? Presumably because a future poet named Virgil would favourably mention Dido in an epic that would never die. To make his point, Virgil gave Aeneas's speech on this subject a form similar to *Philip's* comparison (item 6, above) of the longevity of the earth, sun, etc., as follows:

While rolling rivers into seas shall run,  
And round the space of heav'n the radiant sun;  
While trees the mountain tops with shade supply,  
Your honor, name, and praise shall never die.

—Translated by John Dryden



10. The foregoing episode occurs in book I of the *Aeneid*. In book IX of that work, Virgil again predicted that his epic would long endure. There, referring to two brave warriors whose deeds he had recounted, he wrote:

Then pierced he sinks upon his comrade slain,  
and death's long slumber puts an end to pain.  
O happy pair! If aught my verse ensure,  
No length of time shall make your memory wane  
While, throned upon the Capitol secure,  
The Aeneian house shall reign, and ...[Rome] endure.

—Translated by E. Fairfax Taylor

In this passage, Virgil used Posidonius' procedure (item 5, above): So long as this culture remains alive, my poem will be read.

My next Roman author, Ovid, in his *Amores* (Loves), predicted immortal fame not only for himself but also for his contemporary Tibullus.

11. Regarding himself, Ovid said, in language reminiscent of Horace's words which were quoted above ("I shall not wholly die") :

So when the final fires my bones consume,  
I'll live, and much of me survive the tomb."

—Translated by J. Wright Duff

12. The foregoing quotation, about the destiny of Ovid's *own* writings, is taken from book I of the *Amores*. In book III of the same work, Ovid made two points with reference to the death of *another* poet of his era, namely, Tibullus: (a) Poets die physically just as everyone else does, but (b) their souls, in the Elysian fields, are forever blest. This is not the same as saying that the *fame* of poets endures beyond their physical death, but it is some kind of celebration of poets' immortality. Here is what Ovid wrote:

But what can Death's abhorred Stroke withstand?  
Say what so sacred he will not profane?  
On all the Monster lays his dusky Hand,  
And Poets are immortal deem'd in vain.

And yet, if ought beyond this mouldering Clay  
But empty Name and shadowy Form remain,  
Thou liv'st dear Youth! Forever young and gay,  
... [And] ever blest shalt rangth' Elysian Plain. ...

Thou, polish'd Bard! Thy Loss tho' here we mourn,  
Hast Swell'd the sacred Number of the Blest.  
Safe rest thy gently Bones within their Urn!  
Nor heavy press the Earth upon thy Breast !

—Translated by "Mr. P——"(1759)

Ovid presented two forecasts, set forth below, about his *own* chances for lasting fame in another of his works—*Tristia* (Sorrows), written during his exile from Rome. The Emperor Augustus had banished Ovid for reasons now unknown, apparently unconnected with the frankness of his amatory poems.

13. Book III of the *Tristia* contains the following message from Ovid to his wife at Rome:

But thou (for after death I shall be free)  
Fetch home these bones, and what is left of me,  
A few Flowers give them, with some Balme, and lay  
Them in some Suburb-grave hard by the way,  
And to Informe posterity, who's there  
This sad Inscription let my marble weare,  
'Here lyes the soft-soul'd Lecturer of Love,  
Whose envy'd wit did his own ruine prove.'  
But thou (whoe'er thou beest, that passing by  
Lendst to this sudden stone a hastie Eye)  
If e'er thou knew'st of Love the sweet disease,  
Grudge not to say, May Ovid rest in peace!  
This for my tombe: but in my books they'll see  
More strong and lasting Monuments of mee,  
Which I believe (though fatall) will afford  
An endless name unto their ruin'd Lord.

- Translated by Henry Vaughan

14. In book IV of the *Tristia*, Ovid wrote again briefly on the same subject, as follows:

If then we poets can the truth divine,  
Come death whenever, dust, I am not thine.

—Translated by John Gower

15. My last quotation from Ovid is taken from his most famous work, the *Metamorphoses* (Mythological Transformations):

Now have I brought a work to end  
Which neither Jove's fierce wrath,  
Nor sword, nor fire, nor fretting age  
With all the force it hath

Are able to abolish quite.  
Let come that fatal hour  
Which, saving of his brittle flesh,

Hath over me no power.

And at his pleasure make an end  
Of my uncertain time;  
Yet shall the better part of me  
Assured be to climb

Aloft above the starry sky:  
And all the world shall never  
Be able for to quench my name;  
For look! How far so ever

The Roman Empire by the right  
Of conquest shall extend  
So far shall all folk read this work;  
And time without all end,

If poets as by prophecy  
About the truth may aim,  
My life shall everlastingly  
Be lengthened still by fame.

—Translated by Arthur Golding

The foregoing prediction, with its reference to the expansion of the Roman Empire, exemplifies once more the concept of Posidonius (item 5) that an inspired poet's writings will be read as long as the social milieu in which worked continues to thrive.

Of the Roman writers of shorter poems, I shall now quote pertinent extracts from the works of Catullus, Propertius, and the one with whom I began this article, Quintus Horatius Flaccus.

16. Catullus did not *predict* that the fame of his poems would be eternal. Instead, he *prayed* for that happy outcome. His prayer, addressed to the Poetic Muse as "Lady and Queen of Song," was as follows:

My Book, ... [0] Lady and Queen of Song,  
This one kind gift I crave of thee,  
That it may live for ages long!

—Translated by Andrew Lang

17. Propertius declared that great poetry *in general* enjoys enduring life, but he probably hoped that this *own* works would be included in the category of great poetry. He wrote:

Time cannot wither talents' well-earned fame:  
True genius has secured a deathless name.

—Translator not known

I come now to Horace, whose writings are sprinkled with references to lasting fame resulting from poetic creativity. The passages which I shall quote from Horace on this subject are:

*Odes*—book III, odes 13 and 30; book IV, ode 9

*Epistles*—book I, epistle 20

18. In book III, ode 13, Horace said of the Bandusian Fount (*Fons Bandusiae*) that it will live forever because he, Horace, had sung about it. Parts of this ode, in two versions, are especially worth quoting on our subject.

(a) O gurgling font ! thy fame shall spread  
When songs of mine are telling  
Of yonder oak that lifts its head  
Above thy rocky dwelling!

—Translated by Henry H. Pierce

(b) [Bandusian Fount, this] verse of mine  
Will rank thee one with founts divine.

—Translated by Austin Dobson

19. In Horace's most famous poem on this theme (ode 30 of book III) he said that his writings would be read as long as the pontiff of the Roman religion, along with the Vestal Virgins, shall continue to climb the Capitoline Hill in Rome for their daily ritual. This illustrates once more Posidonius's maneuver of predicting that a poet's fame will endure as long as the surrounding culture continues to be vigorous.

I shall quote pertinent parts of this ode in three prominent translations.

(a) Now have I reared a monument  
More durable than Brass,  
And one that doth the royal scale  
Of pyramids surpass ...

Not all of me shall die: my praise  
Shall grow, and never end,  
While pontiff and mute vestals shall  
The Capitol ascend.

—Translated by William E. Gladstone.

Gladstone was a Prime Minister of Great Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria.

(b) Not lasting bronze nor pyramid upreared  
By princes shall outlive my powerful rhyme.  
The monument I build, to men endeared,  
Not biting rain, nor raging wind, nor time,

Endlessly flowing through the countless years,  
Shall e'er destroy. *I* shall not wholly die;  
The grave shall have of *me* but what appears;  
For *me* fresh praise shall ever multiply.

As long as priest and silent Vestal wind  
The Capitolian steep, tongues shall tell o'er  
How humble Horace rose above his kind  
Where Aufidus's rushing waters roar.

—Translated by Grant Showerman

Aufidus is the name of a river flowing near Horace's dwelling place.

(c) I've areared a monument, my own,  
More durable than brass,  
Yea, kingly pyramids of stone  
In height it doth surpass.

Rain shall not sap, nor driving blast  
Disturb its settled base,  
Nor countless ages rolling past  
Its symmetry deface.

*I* shall not wholly die. Some part  
Nor that a little, shall  
Escape the dark destroyer's dart,  
And his grim festival.

For long as with his Vestals mute  
Rome's Pontifex shall climb  
The Capitol, my fame shall shoot  
Fresh buds through future time.

—Translated by Sir Theodore Martin

20. Horace, in book IV, ode 9, stated three themes pertinent to our topic. The *first* theme, long life for his own poems, was expressed in the following lines:

Think not these words are doomed to die  
Which, wedded to the tuneful string,  
With newborn arts of minstrelsy  
From sounding Aufidus I sing.

—Translated by William E. Gladstone

The *second* theme celebrates the abiding fame of two Greek lyricists, namely, Sappho and her younger compatriot, Anacreon. Here are selected translations of what Horace said about that pair of poets.

(a) Not even trifles of the kind  
Anacreon wrote decay,  
The passion in her muse enshrined  
Still breathes through Sappho's lay.

—Translated by A.E. Aglen

(b) The generations pass away  
But spare Anacreon's sportive lay;  
And love still breathes where Sappho sings  
And still the soul of rapture clings  
To the wild throbbings of ... [their] strings.

—Translated by Sir Stephen de Vere

(c) Time hath not yet effaced the merry jest  
Anacreon sang. Still lives and glows the fire  
Aeolian Sappho to her lyre  
Whispered from love-sick breast.

—Translated by John Marshall (1908)

The *third* theme of book IV, ode 9, is: There were brave men before Agamemnon, but they all lie unsung, whereas Agamemnon was lucky to have his Homer. I shall quote versions of this theme by two translators already cited (Gladstone and Pierce), as well as a paraphrase by Alexander Pope.

(a) Era Agamemnon saw the light  
There lived brave men: but tearless all,  
Enfolded in eternal night,  
For lack of sacred minsterels, fall.

—Translated by William E. Gladstone

(b) Ah! Many a hero fought and bled  
Era Agamemnon breathed the air.  
Yet all have joined the stranger dead  
Unwept, because no bard was there.

—Translated by Henry H. Pierce

(c) Sages and chiefs long since had birth  
Era Caesar was, or Newton named:  
These raised new empires o'er the earth,  
And those new Heavens and systems framed;

Vain was the chiefs, and sages' pride;  
They had no poet, and they died.  
In vain they schemed, in vain they bled.  
They had no poet, and are dead.

—Translated by Alexander Pope

21. My last quotation from Horace is taken from his *Epistles*, book I, epistle 20,

where, addressing his scroll (book I), he predicted that it would be used as a textbook in suburban schools. Not having found a good verse translation of this epistle, I quote from the version of it published in the Loeb Classical Library:

You will be loved in Rome, ... [but this] fate, too, awaits you,  
that ... [will] teach boys their A B C in the city's outskirts.

—Translated by H. Rushton Fairclough

22. Martial, supposedly doubting whether he would be read in the future, asked for signs of recognition *before* he died. He wrote:

He unto whom thou art so partial,  
Oh, reader! Is the well-known Martial,  
The Epigrammatist: while living,  
Give him the fame thou wouldst be giving:  
So shall he hear, and feel, and know it—  
Post-obits rarely reach a poet.

—Translated by Lord Byron

### Oriental Writers

I turn now to the Orient for several striking pronouncements on this idea of a lasting monument formed by a poet's writings.

23. Valmiki is the reputed author of the Hindu epic *Ramayana* (or, as the name appears in my quotation, *Ramayan*). In the passage to be quoted, the god Brahma is speaking. He says:

As long as in this firm-set land  
The streams shall flow, the mountains stand,  
So long throughout the world, be sure,  
The great *Ramayan* shall endure.

—Translated by T.H. Griffith

You will recognize, in the passage just quoted, the phenomenon first set forth in item 6 above, namely, the prediction that the fame of a great poet will last as long as the world of nature itself survives.

24. From India, I move to Persia, where Firdausi (ninth century) wrote an epic called the *Shah Nameh* (Dynasty of the Shahs). In it, Firdausi declared:

- From poesy I've raised a tower high  
Which neither wind nor rain can ever harm.
- Over this work the years shall come and go,  
And he that wisdom hath shall learn its charm.

—Translated by A.V.W. Jackson

Firdausi's compatriot Hafiz (died 893) is the last of the Oriental poets who I shall quote on the subject of inspired writing as an everlasting monument. Hafiz's grave, near Shiraz, is said to be even today a shrine for lovers of lyric poetry.

25. The theme of my first example taken from Hafiz is: My fame will last so long and will so much honor my monarch (the Shah-in-Shah) that he should reward me now generously.

So fresh and sweet these songs that Hafiz sings,  
They shall be young still when the world is old;  
I often marvel that the King of Kings  
Covers him not from head to foot with gold.

—Translated by Richard Le Gallienne

26. The theme of the second example from Hafiz is: My fame will keep alive the memory of my loved one.

All future time shall dream of what you were:  
Such magical endurance hath *his* breath,  
Hafiz shall keep thy face a flower still  
In spite of death.

—Translated by Richard Le Gallienne

27. Thirdly, Hafiz seems to have reflected as follows on the relation of future fame to present living: Although your fame, Hafiz, will be everlasting, enjoy life while you can. Hafiz, remember well how short is spring, ...  
Thou nightingale that shall forever sing.

—Translated by Richard Le Gallienne.

### Continental Europe

Many of Europe's writers in the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era were more deeply concerned with immortality in the traditional sense that in Horace's idea of a literary monument that will outlast the Pyramids. Nevertheless, some intrepid humanists continued to express the thought that great poetry will endure.

28. Moses ibn Ezra, for example, a poet living in Spain in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries and writing in Hebrew, associated, as had others before him, the poet's fame with that of his beloved. Foreshadowing Ben Jonson's "Drink to me only with thine eyes," ibn Ezra wrote as follows:

Come, Ophrah, fill my cup—but not with wine;  
The splendor of thine eyes therein let shine.  
So shall the draught thou pour'st this night in Spain  
Bear to far lands and days thy fame—and mine!

—Translated by Solomon Solis-Cohen

29. Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585) modestly declared that his songs about his sweetheart would be sung *at least by her* until she was old.

When you are very old, at evening  
You'll sit and spin beside the fire, and say,



Humming my songs, 'Ah, well, ah well-a-day!  
When I was young, of me did Ronsard sing'.

—Translated by Andrew Lang

30. In Poland, Jan Kochanowski (1530-1584) again expressed the idea (following ibn Ezra) that the loved one will be remembered because the poet's portrayal of her will endure.

Thy name, sweet lady, that my glad lips love,  
That my pen joys to celebrate in rhyme,  
Shall in my lines a lasting honour prove  
And proud preeminence in future time.

Should men high porphyry in tribute raise  
In sculptured grace, adorn'd with molten gold,  
To give your worth and beauty fitting praise,  
Yet would the luster of *that* work grow old

Nor pillar nor Egyptian monument  
Can ward off ineluctable decay.  
For fire and deluge all their rage will vent  
And time's harsh envy waste their stones away.  
Only my deathless verse your fame uprears.  
Above the rapine and the wreck of years.

—Translated by Watson Kirkconnell

### Predecessors and Younger Contemporaries of Shakespeare

31. Our exhibits from English poets on enduring literary fame begin with a stanza written by John Heywood (born about 1497). It associates the poet's fame with that of his inamorata, as do large numbers of the examples from English literature that will follow this one.

This gift alone I shall her give  
When death doth what he can:  
Her honest fame shall ever live  
Within the mouth of men.

Two samples from Edmund Spenser (born 1552) continue our exhibition. Both samples are taken from his sonnet sequence called "Amoretti." The word "thereof" in the first extract refers to the peerless beauty of his lady love.

32. Even this verse vowd to eternity.  
Shall be thereof immortal monument  
And tell her prayse to all posterity,

That may admire such worlds rare wonderment.

—From sonnet 69

33. One day I wrote her name upon the strand,  
But came the waves and washed it away:  
Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,  
But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray

Wayne man, sayd she, that doest in vayne assay,  
A mortall thing so to immortalize,  
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,  
And eek my name bee wyped out lykewise.

Not so (quod I), let baser things devize  
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:  
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,  
And in the hevens wryte your glorious name.

Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,  
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

—Sonnet 75

Next we shall pluck relevant extracts from the corpus of a writer much less famous than Spenser—Samuel Daniel (born about 1562). I shall quote five passages from Daniel on our theme of literary fame predicted by poets.

34. The first of my illustrative passages from Daniel echoes Horace's compelling thought, "I shall not wholly die."

[We] give our labours yet this poor delight,  
That when our days do end they are not done;  
And though we die, we shall not perish quite,  
But live two lives, where others have but one.

—From "Musophilus"

35. The second example from Daniel invokes the idea, which we have met a number of times before, that the poet's output will be read as long as his culture continues to exist.

I know I shall be read, among the rest,  
So long as men speak English, and so long,  
As verse and virtue shall be in request,  
Or grace to honest industry belong.

—From "To the Reader"

The final three examples from Daniel are in another previously discussed category—

of promises to the beloved of lasting fame for her on the basis of the poet's celebration of her qualities. Two of the three are from the sonnet sequence which Daniel addressed "To Delia."

36. This may remain thy lasting monument,  
Which happily posterity may cherish;  
These colours with thy fading are not spent,  
These may remain when thou and I shall perish.  
*If* they remain, then shalt thou live thereby;  
They *will* remain, and so thou canst not die.

—From sonnet 34

37. These are the arks, the trophies I erect,  
That fortify thy name against old age;  
And these thy sacred virtues must protect  
Against the dark and time's consuming rage.  
Though th' error of my youth they shall discover,  
Suffice, they show I lived and was thy lover.

—From sonnet 46

38. Finally, I quote from a similar promise made by Daniel, which was addressed not to Delia but to a friend named Rosamund.

[Before] I die, this much my soul doth vow, ...  
[These lines] shall sweeten death with ease of mind, ...  
[For] I will cause posterity ... [to] know  
How fair thou wert above all womankind.

Our next author, Michael Drayton (born 1563, a year before Shakespeare), has provided us with two striking statements on our theme, both of which appear in his sonnet sequence to which he gave the curious title "Idea."

39. In the first passage to be presented here, Drayton, in the manner of Samuel Daniel, not only promises his lady immortality through his enduring verse, but also applies to himself Horace's prediction that he will not wholly die (Drayton says that his "better part" will live).

And though in youth my youth untimely perish  
To keep those from oblivion and the grave,  
Ensuing ages yet my rhymes shall cherish,  
Where I, entombed, my better part shall save;  
And though this earthly body fade and die,  
My name shall mount upon eternity.

—From sonnet 34

The rhyming of "perish" and "cherish" in this passage reminds us of the same rhyme in the third extract the poems of Samuel Daniel.

40. In another sonnet, Drayton again promises his beloved the gift of “eternity” though his “immortal song.” In line 8 of this poem, Drayton seems to use the word: “superfluous” to mean not “more than necessary” but rather “superabundant.”

How many paltry, foolish, painted things,  
That now in coaches trouble ev’ry street,  
Shall be forgotten, whom no poet sings,  
Era they be well wrapped in their winding sheet!

Where I to thee eternity shall give  
When nothing else remaineth of these days,  
And queens hereafter shall be glad to live  
Upon the alms of thy superfluous praise;

Virgins and matrons reading these my rhymes  
Shall be so much delighted with thy story  
That they shall grieve they lived not in these times,  
To have seen thee, their sex’s only glory.  
So shalt thou fly above the vulgar throng.  
Still to survive in my immortal song.

—Sonnet 6

## Shakespeare

In 1564, there came into the world William Shakespeare, who, as we shall see, contributed landmark lines to our saga on poets’ sanguine hopes of achieving literary immortality.

41. Of the seven Shakespearian sonnets containing passages pertinent to our theme, the first one urged the loved one to leave a child or children to posterity, and then promised her literary immortality as well as long-lasting lineage.

But were some child of yours alive that time,  
You should live twice—in it, and in my rime.

—From sonnet 17

42. In his next treatment of lasting literary fame, Shakespeare added to his promise of long life for *his beloved* a prediction that *he, the poet*, would be read as long as humanity continues to exist. In the second line of this poem, “fair” is a noun (meaning “beauty”), and “owest” means “ownest.”

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander’st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st:

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long live this, and and this gives life to thee.

—From sonnet 18

43. The promise to his sweetheart—of immortality through his poems—is repeated in the next extract.

Yet do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong,  
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

—From sonnet 19

Thus, in three successive sonnets, numbers 17 to 19, Shakespeare proclaimed his hope of being read by generations to come.

44. In the next sample, we find not only the promise of lasting fame for the beloved but also the notion of the poet's having built a monument more lasting than bronze and, in addition, the idea that the poet's words will be read as long as the world itself shall last (he says: until the day of judgment).

Not marble nor the gilded monuments  
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme.  
But you shall shine more bright in these contents  
Than unswept stone, besmer'd with sluttish time.

When wasteful war shall statues overturn,  
And broils root out the work of masonry,  
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn  
The *living* record of your memory.

'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity  
Shall you pacee forth: your praise shall still find room  
Even in the eyes of all posterity  
That wear this world out to the ending doom.

So, till the judgement ... [day when you] arise  
You live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes.

—Sonnet 55

In each of my final three samples from the sonnets, which are now to be presented, Shakespeare invokes the notion of his poems as *providing the one that he loves* ("You" ... "he" ... and "thou") with a monument that will last forever.

45. Your monument shall be my gentle verse,  
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;  
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse  
When all the breathers of this world are dead.  
You [still] shall *live*—such virtue hath my pen—

Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.

—From sonnet 81

46. Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?

Excuse not silence so, for 't lies in thee

To make him much outlive a gilded tomb

And to be praised of ages yet to be.

Then do thy office, Muse; I teach thee how

To make him seem long *hence* as he shows now.

—From sonnet 101

47. And thou in this shalt find thy monument,

When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

—From sonnet 107

48. That Shakespeare's writings would long outlive Shakespeare is a thought expressed not only by himself but also by Ben Jonson (1573?-1637), who wrote:

Thou art ... alive still, while thy book doth live

And we have wits to read and praise to give.

### Seventeenth Century

49. Having thus exploited Shakespeare for my purpose, I turn now to his younger contemporary, Richard Barnsfield (born 1574), who wrote as follows, not reading the future of his own poetic output, but instead regarding the prospects for the poetic work of Chaucer, Sir Philip Sidney, and other authors:

Yet, though their bodies lie full low in ground,

As every thing must die that erst was born,

Their living fame no fortune can confound,

Nor ever shall their labors be forlorn.

50. A curious contradiction of our theme of the poet's hope of everlasting fame is found in the following lines written by John Marston (born around 1575):

... Let others pray

Forever their fair poems flourish may;

But as for me, hungry oblivion

Devour me quick.

51. Giles Fletcher (born around 1588) proceeded to reverse Marston's negative hope, and expressed the thought that the admirable qualities of her whom he (Fletcher) cherished would be celebrated, as would her friend the poet, as long as time shall last. Fletcher wrote:

In time the storg and stately turrets fall,

In time the rose and silver lilies die,

In time ht emonarchs captive are, and thrall,

In time the sea and rivers are made dry. ...

Thus all, sweet fair, in time must have an end,

Except thy beauty, virtues, and thy friend.

Thomas Carew, the source of our next few specimens, was born around 1598 and was thus ten years younger than Giles Fletcher. Carew was a diplomat as well as a poet.

52. In the first of three poems of Carew's that I shall quote on our subject, he says that, if he is truly inspired by his muse, then the name of her whom he addresses in the poem will be an "immortal name."

So may my goddess from her heaven inspire  
My frozen bosom with a Delphic fire;  
And then the world shall, by that glorious flame,  
Behold the blaze of thy immortal name.

53. The second poem by Carew which deals with the topic of lasting literary fame takes the form of a dialogue between Cleon (the poet) and Celia (his beloved):

Cleon—Thus are we both redeem'd from time,  
I by thy grace.

Celia —                      And I  
Shall live in thy immortal rhyme,  
Until the Muses die.

54. Finally, Carew offers this advice to himself: If she whom you adore does not requite your love, *leave* her (he says, "Die!"), and she as a consequence will *fail* to achieve immortality through your writings. Thus:

If she must still deny,  
Weep not, but die;  
And in thy funeral fire  
Shall all her fame expire.

55. Thomas Randolph (born 1605) wrote, modestly comparing his poetry to a connection with the next generation:

Let clowns get wealth and heirs;  
When I am gone, ...  
If I a poem leave,  
That poem is my son.

56. Edmund Waller (born 1606) expressed some skepticism about the predictions of poets that their writings will be read in the distant future. In his famous poem that begins "Go, lovely rose!" he remarked on the *short span of life* of those who are "so wondrous sweet and fair." As to whether (by contrast) their *fame* will live after them because they are celebrated in poems, Waller wrote wryly in another composition as follows:

Poets may boast, as safely vain  
Their works shall with the world remain:  
Both bound-together live or die,  
Their verses and their prophecy.

57. John Milton (Born 1608) seconded Ben Jonson's prediction (item 48 above) of

lasting fame for what Shakespeare had written. Milton's tribute to Shakespeare was as follows:

What needs my Shakespear for his honour's Bones,  
The labour of an age in piles Stones,  
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid  
Under a Stary-pointing Pyramid?

Dear son of memory, great heir of Fame,  
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name!  
Thou in our *wonder* and astonishment  
Hast built thy self a live-long Monument. ...  
And so Sepulcher's in such pomp dost lie  
That kings for such a Tomb would wish to die.

For his own poetry, Milton made no such dramatic claim of long life. He wrote, however, in one of his prose works: "[I hope] that by labour and ... study ... I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die."

58. From John Suckling (born 1609), we have a statement on the enduring life not of *his* poems but of the poems of *ancient writers*. He declared:

The ancient poets and their learned rhymes  
We still admire in these our later times,  
And celebrate their fame. Thus, though they die,  
Their names can never taste mortality.

## **Eighteenth Century**

Since most of the writings of Joseph Addison (born 1672) were published after 1700, I present his two contributions to our theme as the opening items under a heading for the new century. The *first* of his two contributions, however, was published in 1694; the second, in 1703.

59. Addison predicted that the works of Edmund Waller (see item 56 above) would move our passions (and the comeliness of Waller's Sacharissa would kindle love) as long as beautiful women arouse desire. He wrote:

While tender airs and lovely dames inspire  
Soft melting thoughts and propagate desire,  
So long shall Waller's strains our passions move,  
And Sacharissa's beauties kindle love.

60. In his other contribution, Addison seems to have Horace in mind. Horace, you will remember, declared that he had immortalized the Bandusian Fount by his poetry which celebrated its gurgling (item 18). In keeping with that proposition, Addison wrote that streams so celebrated "run forever."



I look for streams immortaliz's in song,  
That lost in silence and oblivion lie  
(Dumb are their fountains and their channels dry),  
Yet run forever by the Muse's skill,  
And in the smooth descriptions murmur still.

61. Ambrose Philips (born about 1675) wistfully *hoped* but did not *predict* that his poems would be read by posterity. He wrote, using Colin as a conventional designation for a rustic rhyming lover:

O that like Colin I had skill rhymes:  
To purchase credit with succeeding times.

62. If we truly heard an echo of Horace in Addison (item 60), then probably another reverberation of Horace will be found in a poem of John Gay (born 1685). Horace, in the final ode of his third book of lyrics, declaimed, "I have made me a monument more lasting than bronze," and on that account "I shall not wholly die" (item 19). Gay also argued that his complete works would be "ripe of immortality" and that therefore the "Eternal Part" of him (his fame) would not die. Here is how Gay stated this prediction:

And now compleat my gen'rous Labours lye,  
Finished, and ripe for Immortality.  
Death shall entomb in Dust this Mould'ring Frame,  
[And after present writers are forgotten,]  
This work shall shine, and Walkers bless my Name.

Perhaps the reference to "Walkers" means: As long as humans walk the earth, my poems will be remembered.

63. In the case of Alexander Pope (born 1688), since almost all of his "The Rape of the Lock" is mock-heroic, it is hard to say how seriously we should take four lines in that poem in which Pope says, in effect: Belinda, your eyes ("fair suns") and your hair will die, but your *name* will live because of what my muse has here wrought. The four lines are as follows:

When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,  
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,  
This Lock the Muse shall consecrate to fame,  
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

As it happens, the writers whom I have cited on recent pages have all been English. For two pertinent non-English comments, I now turn to France. Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet, born 1694) made one affirmative prediction and one negative prediction about the lasting fame of certain specimens of poetry.

65. Voltaire's first comment relates to a line in Lucretius's long philosophical poem, *De Rerum Natura* (The Nature of Things). The line which Voltaire cites alludes to a grisly

human sacrifice, that of Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, to enable the Greek fleet to proceed to Troy. Lucretius's line, a magnificent example of dactylic hexameter, reads as follows: *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum* (book I, line 101).

A lively translation of the line just quoted is found in William Ellery Leonard's version of the poem. His translation of this line, itself a magnificent example of blank verse, reads:

Such are the crimes to which religion leads.

Voltaire, in the anti-religious spirit of the French Enlightenment, said of this line that it will last as long as the world itself lasts.

66. The other comment that Voltaire made on lasting literary fame relates to a poem by Jean-Jacques Rousseau entitled (in English translation) "Ode to Posterity." Voltaire's appraisal was that the poem "will never reach its destination."

67. My final example of a pronouncement from the eighteenth century on the lasting fame of poets is statement made by Edward Gibbon (born 1737). In 1796, he wrote in his *Memoirs* that among the consolations of old age is "the vanity of authors who presume the immortality of their name and writings."

In the section that follows, however, we shall find a number of appraisals more sanguine than Gibbon's of poets' predictions about the durability of their writings.

### Nineteenth Century

68. William Wordsworth (born 1770) predicted that grateful readers would love the poems of John Dyer (1700-1758) as long as sheep stray and thrushes pipe in Dyer's region (Gongan Hill).

Yet pure and powerful minds, hearts meek and still,  
A grateful few, shall love thy modest lay,  
Long as the shepherd's bleating flocks shall stray...  
Long as the thrush shall pipe on Gongon Hill.

On two occasions, Walter Savage Landor (born 1775) asserted that posterity would remember not only him but also the girl that he wrote about.

69. In 1831, Landor propounded the view that future *lovers* at least would remember him and his girl.

Soon shall Oblivion's deepening veil  
Hide all the peopled hills you see,  
The gay, the proud, while lovers hail  
In distant ages you and me.

70. In 1863, Landor *expanded* the category of those who would remember him

and his friend. This time, it was men unborn.

I have since written what no tide  
Shall ever wash away, what men  
Unborn shall read o'er oceans wide  
And find lanthe's name agen.

71. Lord Byron (born 1788), in "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," observed that Sappho had *given* eternal life to those that she celebrated in her immortal poetry, and he pondered the question, Could not her verse save *her*? In the last line of the following extract on this point, Byron seems to use the verb "live" in its sense of "live bodily," but he then uses the noun "life" in an allegorical sense, meaning "lasting fame."

Dear Sappho! Could not verse immortal save  
That breast imbued with such immortal fire?  
Could she not live who life eternal gave?

72. Here I interpose an American poet among the Britishers. William Cullen Bryant (born 1794) addressed as follows the inspired poet *as a type* (not a specific poet), whose magic words, Bryant said, would survive:

So shalt thou frame a lay  
That haply shall endure from age to age,  
And they who read shall say  
'What witchery hangs upon this poet's page!'

73. John Keats (born 1795) enters our story with a poem about a specific poet, Leigh Hunt, who was eleven years younger than Keats. Hunt had been imprisoned for having offended the Prince Regent. After Hunt's release, Keats wrote the following sonnet in which he expressed the opinion that Hunt would continue to live in memory long after his prisoners are forgotten.

What though, for showing truth to flatter'd state,  
Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,  
In his immortal spirit, been as free  
As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.

Minion of grandeur! Think you he did wait?  
Think you he nought but prison walls did see,  
Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key?  
Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate.

In Spenser's halls he stray's, and bowers fair,  
Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew  
With daring Milton through the fields of air:  
To regions of his own his genius true  
Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair  
When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?

74. As is true of Keats, Lord Tennyson (born 1809) also wrote on the lasting fame not of himself but of another poet. In Tennyson's case, the other poet was Catullus, who in ancient Rome composed an elegy, still widely read, on the death of a sparrow that was dear to Catullus's on-again, off-again mistress, Lesbia. Tennyson, ascribing eternal life to the sparrow (meaning the poetry *about* the sparrow), cheered "Catullus, whose dead songster never dies."

At this point, I again interpose an American among the many British writers who have dealt with our theme. Walt Whitman (born 1819) had three contributions to the theme of the writer's contact with posterity.

75. To one a century hence or any number of centuries  
hence,  
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.  
When you read these ...

Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with you.)

76. You distant, dim unknown—or young or old—countless,  
unspecified, readers below'd

We never met, and ne'er shall meet—and yet our souls  
embrace, long close and long.

77. Camerado, this is no book  
Who touches this touches a man,  
(Is it night? Are we here together alone?) ...  
Dear friend whoever you are take this kiss,  
I give it specially to you, do not forget me, ...  
Remember my words, I may again return,  
I love you, I depart from materials,  
I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.  
I return to England now for the next group of writers.

78. William C. Bennett (born 1820) assured his lady love that she would remain alive in the songs about her that he had written, because those songs would *retain their popularity*.

For thou shalt live, defying time  
And mocking death,  
In music on—O life sublime!—  
A nation's breath;  
Love, in a people's songs, shall be  
The eternal life I'll give to thee.

79. A clerk in the British Admiralty, Frederick Locker-Sampson (born 1821), provides

our next example, on the same theme as Bennett's, with two additional points, namely, that the lasting fame which Locker-Sampson can offer through his verses (a) is longer-lasting than any gift that the lady love can possibly offer him and (b) is also longer-lasting than her beauty.

You boast a gift to charm the eyes,  
I boast a gift than Time defies:  
For mine will still be mine, and last  
When all your pride of beauty's past. ...  
For ages hence the great and good  
Will judge you as I choose they should.  
In days to come, the peer or clown,  
With whom I still shall win renown,  
Will only know that you were fair  
Because I chanced to say you were.

80. Austin Dobson (born 1840) returned to the theme that the passage of time *cannot* destroy what the poet has created.

Even the gods must go;  
Only the lofty Rhyme  
Not ... years can overthrow—  
Nor long array of time.

81. William Watson (born 1858) referred to himself as:

The maker of this verse, which shall endure  
By splendour of its theme that cannot die.

The "theme" to which Watson alluded is itself the immortality of poets, as shown in the following lines from the same poem of Watson's in which Maro, the Mantuan, is Virgil; "thou" refers to Tennyson; and the idea is expressed that the poet's works will be read not only as long as his culture lasts, but even longer (*survi ving* his "racee and tongue").

Captains and conquerors leave a little dust,  
And kings a dubious legend of their reign;  
The swords of Caesars, they are less than rust;  
The poet doth remain.

Dead is Augustus, Maro is alive;  
And thou, the Mantuan of our age and clime,  
Like Virgil shalt thy race and tongue survive,  
Bequeathing no less honeyed words to time,  
Embalmed in amber of eternal rhyme,  
And rich with sweets for every Muse's hive.

## Twentieth Century

We begin our examples from the twentieth century with two extracts from the writings of Edna St. Vincent Millay. In the first extract, she *predicted* that her verses will be read in

the future; in the second, she *pleaded* that future readers remember her.

82. It pleases me, somehow, to say,  
'This book when I am dead will be  
A little faint perfume of me.'

83. Stranger, pause and look;  
From the dust of ages  
Lift this little book,  
Turn the tattered pages,

Read me, do not let me die!  
Search the fading letters, finding  
Steadfast in the broken binding  
All that once was I! ...

Boys and girls that lie  
Whispering in the hedges,  
Do not let me die,  
Mix me with your pledges;...

Women at your toil,  
Women at your leisure,  
Till the kettle boil  
Snatch of me your pleasure.

84. The passage which I shall quote from Jamie Holme's writings expresses confidence (of the kind that we have often encountered in our samplings) that the future holds lasting fame for the poet and his beloved.

My love, long after we have laid aside  
These mortal vestures love has found so fair;  
When hungry earth has swallowed all our pride,  
And veiled with dust our lips and eyes and hair—...

Someone may turn the pages of this book  
To read of us, his eyelids stung with tears,  
And wandering in the ways that we forsook  
Thrill to their beauty, down the gulf of years.  
Strange, strange to think, when you and I are gone,  
Our love in yellowing parchment will live on.

I now present two portions of a poem by Archibald MacLeish. In the first portion, the contention that poets will live on by reason of their work is rejected. In the second portion, however, MacLeish argues that *his* description of the beauty of his beloved will live on.

85. Here is the first portion:

The praisers of women in their proud and beautiful poems,  
Naming the grave mouth and the hair and the eyes,  
Boasted those they loved should be forever remembered:  
These were lies.

86. In the second portion, MacLeish wrote that, because of *his description* of “the shape of a leaf [that] lay once on your hair,” that shape will endure forever:  
Till the world ends and the eyes are out and the mouths broken  
Look! It is there!

87. I close this garland of striking passages on poetic survival with a dramatic statement by Yevgeny Yevtushenko which is reminiscent of Horace’s dictum “I shall not wholly die.” Yevtushenko declared on this subject, “[S]omething of me will survive my stay on Earth.”

## Conclusion

The propositions exemplified in the foregoing garland may be summarized as follows :

1. My poems will be read by posterity. As a consequence, I shall not wholly die.
2. My poems constitute a monument more lasting than material structures.
3. My poems will be read as long as my culture lasts—or even longer (as long, perhaps, as humans can read, or indeed as long as the world lasts).
4. Since my poems celebrate the girl that I love, *she* will not wholly die.
5. Individuals who are important during their lives but are *not* glorified in poetic writings are destined to be forgotten.
6. The poems of another writer, whom I admire, will be read by posterity.
7. Poems of *some* other writers, since they lack inspiration, will *not* survive to posterity.

3077 Chestnut St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20015

# Raising the Serpent Power: Some Parallels between Egyptian Religion and Indian Tantra

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TERENCE DUQUESNE

*Unapparent is better than apparent connexion.*

Heraclitus fr B54 D-K

*Awake in peace.*

*You Who are supreme in your marshland a wake in peace!*

*You're a wakening is peace.*

*As the young uraeus awakens in peace*

*So your be awakens in peace.<sup>1</sup>*

Thus, in the famous Middle Kingdom *Hymns to the Diadem*, is the snake at pharaoh's brow invoked. As Erman showed clearly, these morning ritual hymns have very ancient associations and echo the *Pyramid Texts*.<sup>2</sup> The Cobra goddess is often named as *Wrt-hk3w*, the Powerful of Magic.<sup>3</sup> Both the symbolism and the iconography of this serpent, or more properly these twin serpents, seem strongly reminiscent of *kuṇḍalinī*, the 'serpent power' invoked in Indian Tantric ritual.

In a number of my publications I have referred to the role of *kuṇḍalinī* by way of analogy in the context of Egyptian magical ritual.<sup>4</sup> It is not my purpose to argue here the case, if there is one, for diffusion from Egypt to India, because it appears self-evident that certain symbols or hypostases are in the Jungian sense archetypal and therefore that they will be found in diverse cultures: familiar examples include the trickster and the psychopomp. Study of one manifestation of an archetype sheds valuable light on others. Stricker has noted a parallel between the site of the uraeus and the Hindu *tilaka*, or red dot on the forehead,<sup>5</sup> a reference to the third dyd of Śiva<sup>6</sup> and to the *ājñā cakṛa* through which, according to Tantric doctrine, the serpent power emerges.<sup>7</sup>

Tantra is a system of spiritual practice of which there are closely interrelated Hindu and Buddhist strands. It is an ancient but living practice which is based on the texts known as Tantras,<sup>8</sup> very few of which have been edited or translated. Among its characteristics are that it has practical as well as spiritual goals; knowledge of the divine world is gained by meditation; it employs coded language; empowerment is gained through magical proficiency; and the practitioner has a partner who is regarded as an incarnation of the goddess Śakti, consort of Śiva. Tantric techniques are, in short, a means of seizing the



initiative spiritually, and the notion that enlightenment is possible in one's present existence reverses the apparent fatalism of conventional Hinduism. In Tantra, the body is regarded as having a kind of collateral circulation in the form of two 'arteries', *idā* and *piṅgalā*, one of which is red and one white, which may be regarded as two snakes. These are connected to a number of 'circles' (*cakra*) [figure 1]<sup>9</sup> one of which, located at the brow, is designated for *ājñā* or 'gnosis'.<sup>10</sup> This is precisely the site of the uraeus on the Egyptian royal diadem. In the course of Tantric meditation, awareness is achieved when *kuṇḍalinī*, the 'serpent power' is activated.<sup>11</sup>

This divine snake courses upwards from the *mulādhāra cakra* at the perineum, where it normally lies coiled and inactive, to emerge from one of the *cakras* in the head, rather like the Lightning Flash of the Qabalah, only in reverse.<sup>12</sup> Whereas in the *Vedas* sexuality is regarded as impure,<sup>13</sup> the Tantric initiate achieves the *coincidentia oppositorum* through *tabu*-breaking as part of the ritual. In the context of *kuṇḍalinī yoga*, this is done by means of a sacred act of coitus with the female partner.<sup>14</sup> The Indian poet Kāṇha, in an important series of hymns devoted to the raising of the serpent power, expresses its symbolism thus:

*Just as salt dissolves in water, so is the heart which possesses the Mistress of the house.*

*At this exact moment it discovers a like savour if it unites with her again and again for ever.*<sup>15</sup>

Again there is an analogy with the sexual aspects of Hebrew mysticism,<sup>16</sup> although with the difference that in Tantra retention of semen is considered crucial.<sup>17</sup>

In Egyptian religion, the two Merty-goddesses represent a symbolism analogous to that of the red and white snakes of *kuṇḍalinī*. The parallelism is particularly striking because the Merty are shown in the form of serpents and symbolize the two royal crowns – one red and one white – and hence the two complementary parts of Egypt.<sup>18</sup> These deities are also intimately connected with Hathor in her role as goddess of divine intoxication.<sup>19</sup> *The Book of the Dead* contains an invocation to the two snake-goddesses as protectresses of the solar barque, whose ambiguity is reflected in the apparently quite inappropriate title 'Spell for warding off (*xsj*) the two Merty :

*Hail to you Two Companions Two Sisters Merty*

*I have opened you (wp.n.i-tn) by magic (m-hk3)*

*I am the one who shines from the sektet-boat*

*I am Horus the son of Osiris*

*I have come to see my father Osiris.*<sup>20</sup>

Elsewhere in *The Book of the Dead*, Osiris is addressed as the one "whose crown has reached the sky and touched the earth",<sup>21</sup> and a spell in the *Coffin Texts* has the king declaring: "I have come here so that I may turn my snake, that I may raise the uraeus, and that I may cure the great god [Osiris] of that which he has severally suffered."<sup>22</sup> The

transformation of the eye of Re<sup>c</sup> into a cobra is referred to in an obscure passage in p. Bremner-Rhind,<sup>23</sup> and 'raising the uraeus' is documented, not only in the hymns to the diadem to which reference has been made, but in the daily temple ritual during the New Kingdom.<sup>24</sup> *The Book of the Dead* contains a short but powerful spell for making a transformation into a snake called Sa-ta ('Son of the Earth'):

*I am the snake Son-of-Earth<sup>25</sup> the one extended in years  
One who sleeps<sup>26</sup> and is reborn every day  
I am the snake Son-of-Earth who is at the limit of the earth  
I sleep and I am reborn  
Renewed and rejuvenated every day.<sup>27</sup>*

This is nothing less than the justified soul incorporating the *ouroboros* Mehen<sup>28</sup> and thus spanning earth and sky. The sloughing of the snake's skin can be clearly seen as a symbol of healing and rebirth,<sup>29</sup> and in the indigenous population of Arnhem Land the initiate may be reborn only if he is able to be metamorphosed into a rainbow serpent.<sup>30</sup> Jung came close to making a direct association between the snake-and-staff of Asklepios and *kundalini*,<sup>31</sup> the former being a prototype of the Hermetic caduceus with its twin snakes.<sup>32</sup> For those with a symbolic turn of mind the fact that DNA, the basic molecular building-block, has the shape of a dual helix<sup>33</sup> may seem significant. The rhetor Aristides had a dream in which the god Sarapis, taking on the role of the divine healer, held a knife and made an incision (*peritemnein*) in the center of his forehead, the site of the snake-diadem,<sup>34</sup> and Marinus reports that the philosopher Proclus, when sick, saw a snake creeping round his head at the location of his illness.<sup>35</sup> 'Heraldic' figures of twin snakes which resemble those of the caduceus are found in the ancient Near East<sup>36</sup> and, in Egypt, twin ram-headed serpents occur in the iconography of the god Atum, whose name means 'the complete one'.<sup>37</sup> [figure 2] Jachin and Boaz, the twin pillars of the temple of Solomon, similarly suggest the complementarity of *yin* and *yang*.<sup>38</sup> The double snake occurs twice in Hour 10 of the Egyptian *Amduat*: in the upper register, parallel coiled snakes support the sun-disk, while the middle register shows a snake with two heads, one of which wears the red and the other the white crown.<sup>39</sup> [figures 3 & 4]

Ascent by means of transformation into different magical animals is well attested in Egyptian religion. According to the *Coffin Texts*:

*If you (gods) ascend to the sky as serpents  
I shall ascend on your coils  
If you (gods) ascend to the sky as cobras  
I shall ascend on your brows.<sup>40</sup>*

The Brooklyn Museum has a beautiful bronze sphinx of Dynasty XIX. [figure 5]<sup>41</sup> The animal is upright on a standard shaped like a sledge with two upraised uraei in front of its forepaws. This motif is strongly suggestive of typical figures of the jackal god Upwawet, a hypostasis of Anubis. Upwawet's role, in the Old Kingdom, is to take pharaoh to the sky on his sledge, which is usually adorned with an erect cobra. [figure 6]<sup>42</sup> This

parallels the work of Anubis as psychopomp.<sup>43</sup> In a cryptic entry, the lexicographer Hesychius tells us that “dogs are also snakes.”<sup>44</sup> The dog and the snake appear together, for instance, on the iconography of Asclepius.<sup>45</sup> Both types of animal have a strange ambiguity in their symbolism: they are closely associated with death and also with healing, rebirth and transformation.<sup>46</sup>

The above brief and preliminary study will, I hope, highlight a number of interesting topics in comparative religion. I have deliberately avoided entering here into profound questions, crucial as they are, about the ontological status of archetypal symbols. There is certainly evidence, from inscriptions in Prakrit and Old Tamil, that Indians lived and traded in Egypt from at least the second century CE.<sup>47</sup> It is not suggested that Indian motifs are derived from Egyptian, or *vice versa*, or that Egyptian conceptions of the body-soul axis resemble those of Hindu-Buddhist philosophy in every particular, because such is not the case. However, certain analogies relating to invocation of the serpent goddess as the repository of a special sexual and metaphysical power are clearly discernible. Further research is required into the role of ecstasy in Egyptian and other religions, including the importance of *tabu*-breaking for certain magical purposes, and into the multivalency of the snake as a symbol of death, rebirth, and transformation.

## References

<sup>1</sup> A. Erman. *Hymnen an das Diadem* [Berlin, 1911] 34-35 (c. 10-11). I follow Erman (38) in translating *mnhyt* as ‘die kleine Uräusschlange’.

<sup>2</sup> Erman. oc.11-15. A good book on snakes and their symbolism in Egypt is overdue. The following references are selective: T. Hopfner. *Der Tierkult der alten Ägypter* [Wien, 1913] 136-149; E. Hornung, Tiergestaltige Götter der Alten Ägypter, in *Mensch und Tier*, ed. M. Svilar [Bern, 1985] 11-31; H. Kees. *Der Götterglaube im alten Ägypten*<sup>2</sup> [Berlin, 1956] 52-58; S.B. Johnson. *The Cobra Goddess of Ancient Egypt* [London, 1991] 5-11; H. Bonnet. *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* [Berlin, 1952] 733-735 (Sonnenauge), 844-847 (Uräus); I. Nebe. “Werethekau”, *LÄ VI* [1986] 1221-1224; K. Martin. “Uraus”, *LÄ VI* [1986] 864-866.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. *Pyr* 1832. Cf. T. DuQuesne. *Book of the Dead Spell* 194 [in preparation, 1992] § 113.

<sup>4</sup> For instance T. DuQuesne. *A Coptic Initiatory Invocation* [Thame, 1991] §§ 149, 157; T. DeQuesne. Review of B.H. Stricker. *Het zone-offer* [Amsterdam, 1989], *Discussions in Egyptology* 23 [1992] 86 [83-92].

<sup>5</sup> B.H. Stricker. *De geboorte van Horus V* [Leiden, 1989] 655; B.H. Stricker. The Enemies of Re (I), *Discussions in Egyptology* 23 [1992] 71 n274 [45-76]. I discover that *Kuṇḍalinī* itself is referred to in the context of ‘ancient Egyptian Yoga’ by D. Khane, “Signification symbolique de la double royauté pharaonique”, *Bull IFAN* 45 ser II [1983] 277-301; also D. & B. Khane & Khane, *Le Yoga des pharaons* [1983] 65-89. Khane is an astute writer who relies on secondary sources. K. Baer has complained about the conventional translation ‘Book of Breathings’ for LE funerary texts, a title which according to him “sounds like a manual of yoga”: K. Baer, “The Breathing Permit of Hor”, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3 [1968] 111 n7 [109-134].

<sup>6</sup> W.D. O’Flaherty. *Śiva. The Erotic Ascetic* [Oxford, 1981] 375 (7cd<sup>1</sup>). Loose references in occultist writings to the third eye should not obscure the fact that the *cakras*, and the mythology of Śiva’s third eye, reflect profound and considered concepts in Hindu and Buddhist Philosophy.

<sup>7</sup> Tantric sources differ on the exact locus for the exit of *Kuṇḍalinī* 'the coiled one', a word which may mean 'snake' in Sanskrit: J.P. Vogel. *Indian Serpent-lore* [London, 1926] 13n. Cf. Sir J. Woodroffe. [Arthur Avalon] *The Serpent Power*<sup>7</sup> [Madras, 1964] 141-142 and 394-414v (specifically on the ājñā cakras).

<sup>8</sup> On the complex issue of dating: S. Gupta et al. *Hindu Tantrism* [Leiden, 1978] 21; cf. also a Padoux, *Tantrism, Encyclopedia of Religion* XIV [New York, 1987] 272-280. The earliest surviving Buddhist Tantras may belong to the third century CE.

<sup>9</sup> The number of *cakras* varies: cf. D.U. Neff, "The Great Chakra Controversy", *Yoga Journal* [December, 1985] 42-52. The illustration (figure 1) has been published, *inter alia*, in M. Eliade, *Patañjali and Yoga* [New York, 1969] 191.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the excellent paper by H. von Stietencron, Bhairava, *ZDMG. Suppl.* 1. 17.3 [1969] 870-871 [863-871]; also E.C. Visuvalingam, Bhairava's royal brahmanicide, in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees*, ed. A. Hildebeitel [New York, 1989] 157-229.

<sup>11</sup> Most reputable accounts of *Kuṇḍalinī Yoga* are technical. L. Silburn, *La Kuṇḍalinī* [Paris, 1983] gives probably the best account in one volume. Reliable sources include, for Hindu aspects: W.C. Beane. *Myth, Cult and Symbols in Śākta Hinduism* [Leden, 1977] 242-256; S.B. Dasgupt. *Obscure Religious Cults*<sup>3</sup> [Calcutta, 1969] 88-109; M. Eliade. *Yoga* [Princeton, 1969] 236-249; M. Eliade. *Patañjali and Yoga* [New York, 1969] 175-193; Gupta et al. *oc* [1979] 163-185; A. Mookherjee. *Kuṇḍalinī* [London, 1982]; A. Padoux. *Kuṇḍalinī, Encyclopedia of Religion* VIII [New York, 1987] 402-403; P. Rawson. *The Art of Tantra* [London, 1987] 166-182; S. Visuvalingam, *The Transgressive Sacrality of the Dikshita*, in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees*, ed. A. Hildebeitel [New York, 1989] 427-462; Woodroffe. *oc*. For the Buddhist strand, see particularly: [P.C. Bagchi. *Studies in the Tantras* [Calcutta, 1939], not seen]; S.B. Dasgupt. *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* [Calcutta, 1950] 118-125, 186-196; W.Y. Evans-Wentz. *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* [Oxford, 1935]; D.L. Snellgrove. *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* [London, 1987] 293-294; G. Tucci. *Teoria e pratica del mandala* [Roma, 1949] *Passim* (translation as *Theory and Practice of the Mandala*.. London. 1961, especially 108-133..

<sup>12</sup> On the lightning-flash: e.g. A. Bain. *The Keys to Kabbalah* [Bristol, nd. (c 1989)] 4; R. Wang. *The Qablistic Tarot* [York Beach, M.E., 1983] 168-170.

<sup>13</sup> J. Gonda. *Vedic Ritual* [Leiden, 1980] 284, 290-291, 462. On Snakes in the Rg Veda 4.23.5 & 10.189 : *oc* 400, 422-424. For the ambiguity of the serpent and rebirth symbolism, cf. *Mānavadharmasāstra* 2.79, 11.229; also 4.135, 11.134.

<sup>14</sup> On the symbolism, a very useful account by C. Pensa, Considerazioni sul tema della bipolarità nelle religioni indiane, in *Fs G. Tucci II* [Napoli, 1964] 379-409. Cf. also E. Zolla. *Verota segrete esposte in evidenza* [Venezia, 1990] 126-130; Wayman. *The Buddhist Tantras* [New York, 1973] 180-183; Silburn. *Kuṇḍalinī* 164-168.

<sup>15</sup> *Kāñha Dohakosa* 32: in *La Bouddhisme*, ed. L. Silburn [Paris, 1977] 362 [334-365]; cf. M. Shahidullah. *Les chants mystiques de Kāñha* [Paris, 1928] 9-24. The energy concerned "blazes with rays of light whose essence is subtle among subtle things": *Vijñāna Bhairava*, ed. L. Silburn [Paris, 1961] 80 # 28.

<sup>16</sup> M. Idel. *Metaphores et pratiques sexuelles dans la Cabale*, in *Lettre sur la sainteté*, ed. C. Mopsik [Paris, 1986] 327-358.

<sup>17</sup> L.W. Meldman. *Coitus reservatus and mystical sex*, *Gnosis* 17 [1990] 34-38.

<sup>18</sup> W. Guglielmi. *Die Göttin Mr. t* [Leiden, 1991] 201-214.

<sup>19</sup> Guglielmi *oc* 92-99, 226-229. The association between Hathor and divine, sexual intoxication is close. *Tabu-breaking* is also involved in Tantra, as in the cults of deities such as Kotytto, on whom see S. Srebnny, *Kult der thrakischen Göttin Kotytto*, in *Fs. F. Cumont* [Bruxelles, 1936] 423-447.

- <sup>20</sup> Book of the *Dead Spell* 37 (Budge text 102/6-10). For *ksf-Mrty*. Cf. *Coffin Texts* V 303.
- <sup>21</sup> Book of the *Dead Spell* 181 c 52: É. Naville. *Papyrus funéraires* II [Paris, 1914] p110.
- <sup>22</sup> *Coffin Texts* III 3 (spell 164); cf. for instance III 200 (spell 219), IV 80 (spell 312), and IV 366 (s 344), where "I raise myself ... by means of this soul of the horned snake." The rite of raising the uraeus is ancient: see *Pyramid Texts* 194-198,396.
- <sup>23</sup> P.Bremener – Rhind 27/2-4 (pp.60-61, Faulkner).
- <sup>24</sup> A. Moret. *Rituel du culte divine journalier* [Paris, 1902] 232-237.
- <sup>25</sup> Written s3-*t3*+ undulating serpent determinative.
- <sup>26</sup> *sdr. kwi* is probably a euphemism for death.
- <sup>27</sup> *Book of the Dead Spell* 87 (Budge text; 188/1-5).
- <sup>28</sup> Cf. B.H. Stricker. *De grote zeeslang* [Leiden, 1953]. For rebirth as a snake in the Netherworld Bo see W. Barta. *Komparative Untersuchungen zu vier Unterweltsbüchern* [München, 1990] 56-58.
- <sup>29</sup> An eloquent account by Cornutus in *Theologiae Graecae opendium* § 33 Lang; cf. too Cosmas *Carmen LII Gregorii Nazianzeni* (II. 1839, Mai); Schol Aristophanes *Plut* 733.
- <sup>30</sup> P.S.C. Tacon. *Art and the Essence of Being*, in *Animals into Art*, ed. H. Morphy [London, 1989] 246 [236-250].
- <sup>31</sup> C.G. Jung. *Psychology and Alchemy*<sup>2</sup> [Princeton, 1968] 180; cf. also his *Mysterium conjuncti* [Princeton, 1964] 340-343.
- <sup>32</sup> [ ] Samter, Caduceus, *Pauly-Wissowa RE* 5 [1897] 1170-1171.
- <sup>33</sup> Cf. J.D. Watson.. *The Double Helix* [London, 1968].
- <sup>34</sup> Aristides. *Ort* XLIX 47.
- <sup>35</sup> *Marinus vita Procli* § 30.
- <sup>36</sup> E.g. the steatite vase of Gudea: J. Black and A.Green. *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* [London, 1992] 167. Cf. W. Burkert. *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* [Berkeley 1979] 30-33 figs. 1-2
- <sup>37</sup> K.Mysliwiec. Les problèmes des recherches sur l' iconographie du dieu Atoum, in *Ist Int. Congr. Egyptology, Acts* [Berlin 1982] 489-491 fig. 10 (Greco-Roman, sarcophagus fragment CG29318); cf. his f. An adze in the form of a ram-headed snake was called *wrt-hk3w* and used in the Opening of the Mouth ritual Otto. *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual* II [Wiesbaden, 1960] 19-20.
- <sup>38</sup> R.B.Y. Scott. The Pillars Jachin and Boaz, *J. Biblical Lit.* 58 [1939] 143-149; for twin snake doorkeepers; Cf. A. Rosenvasser. *Kerub and Sphinx* [Buenos Aires, 1973] 10- 11.
- <sup>39</sup> E. Hornung. *Amduat* I-[Wiesbaden, 1963] 172-173-pl 10. The latter snake is called *ts-hrw* 'rejoicing faces', recalling *ts- tpw*, an epithet of Anubis in the *Book of Caverns* pl 90 Piankoff.
- <sup>40</sup> *Coffin Texts* III 61(spell 175).
- <sup>41</sup> Brooklyn 61.20: S.B. Johnson. *The Cobra Goddess of Ancient Egypt* [London, 1990] 40 fig. 6
- <sup>42</sup> F.W. von Bissing. *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne- Woser-Re* [Leipzig, 1923] pl 15; other examples in Johnson *o c* 64, 65, 71,125.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. T. DuQuesne. *Jackal at the Shaman's Gate* [Theme, 1991] 18-21. In Greco-Roman times Anubis as psychopomp wears the double crown to symbolize the reintegration of the red and the white: DuQuesne. *Coptic invocation*. §§ 20, 103.

<sup>44</sup> Hesychius. *s v kuon*. I notice a rare, if not unique, Roman- period head of a mummy-mask which depicts a backwards- looking jackal whose tail terminates in a large uraeus, a motif wonderfully rich in symbolism: D. Kurth. *Der Sarg der Teüris* [Mainz 1990] 65 fig 23.

<sup>45</sup> C. Kerényi. *Asklepios* [Princeton, 1959] 10, 32.

<sup>46</sup> P.B. Adamson. The Association of the Dog with Deities of Healing. *Medicina nei Secoli* 1[1978] 53-68. In a number of religious traditions, including the Indian, dogs are also important in *tabu*-breaking:cf. j. Deppert. *Rudras Geburt* [Wiesbaden, 1977] 94-109. An interesting juxtaposition of the snake and the dog: *Prudentius Peristephanon* X 256-257: Venerem precaris, conprece et simiam. / placet sacratus aspis Aesculapii, / crocodillus ibis et canis vur displicent?

<sup>47</sup> R. Salomon. Epigraphic remains of Indian traders in Egypt, *JAOs* 3 [1991] 731-736.

5 (Enigme: Raising to  
superior Power. 1992)

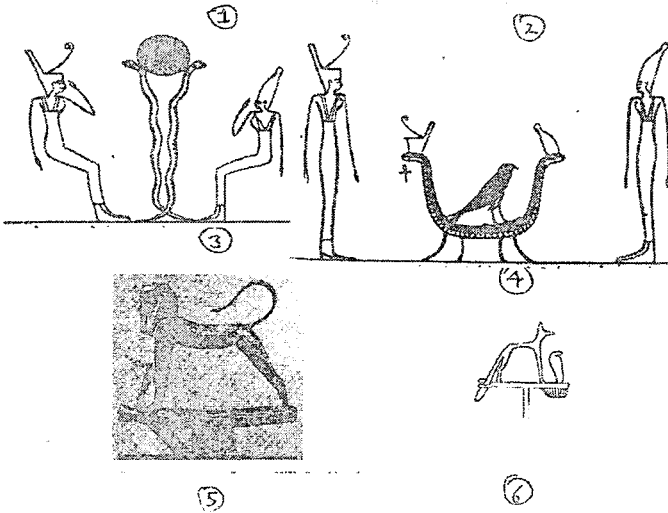
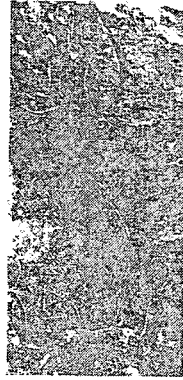
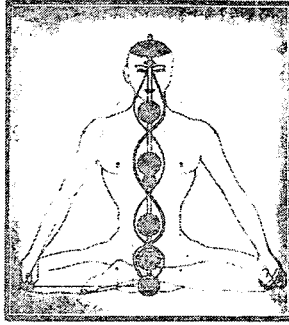




Abb. 25 Darstellung unter dem Kopfe einer Mithrasfigur, Kar



# Minnesang (Love Poems) and its Origin

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PRATIBHA BHATTACHARYA

The formation of society has always been a two-way process – man formulated groups and then gave it a frame work of a certain form and ascribed it with a certain scale of references – which we call the moral and ethical rules; man formulated this for his security and protection, but then this same society has exploited time and time again these very restraints to control human action; man for society and society for man has been the process which we call ‘socialization’. Man has used many modes to ‘shape’ public opinion and through that society – for example art, music, literature. Each of them depicts a certain mood of the society and has been a faithful mirror of its time, the physical and intellectual environment has honed him and given him a certain direction. But then it is equally true that there have been certain ‘rebels’ and revolutionaries in each epoch, they have successfully broken away from the ‘accepted’ frame work of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ in order to let a window in the fortress of accepted thought be wide opened, so that new vistas may open out and reveal themselves and bring the air of new thoughts and possibilities incorporating change into the accepted pattern of social and intellectual thought.

Each period of human existence has produced its poets and artists, they have either earned the whole hearted sanction of the society or then total censure, in any case they have brought about change. Neither Martin Luther nor Protestantism were accepted tamely but their presence has been earth shaking. By the patronization of certain royal or intellectual groups, certain changes have been legitimized – like the new literary epochs that succeeded one another; on the one hand they brought about new way of thought into jaded and stagnant way of life and on the other hand by faithful mirroring of their social and intellectual environment, not only were representatives of their times but won also the acclaim of their peers thus legitimizing the wave of new thought that they represented. So on the one hand the poet or artist is demolishing an old order, on the other hand shows his contemporary how things stand. Here we shall try to examine literature, specially a particular form of it – poetry – and how and why it could have changed, briefly. How religious poem of the early German era gradually changed over in a period of 3 to 4 centuries.

Literature has often portrayed the positive and the normative forces – the aesthetics being the third aspect – sometimes what is and what ought to be may be diametrically opposite each other – as one may find in religious, metaphysical poetry of the old German era. Thus reality and imagination are the two sides of the same coin of human existence. Every literary reaction and counter-reaction has complimented this existence. Literature is at once general-voicing the opinions and picturing the majority – and individualistic and

revolutionary, portraying the dynamic process of change. These rebels in the sea of literary arrangements stand out like rocks – of course here we are not talking about the ‘ivory tower’ kind of literature which is neither realistic nor dynamic, it could be brilliant or scholastic but merely rhetorical.

Christianity has been at once a great political force as well as a sort of container in which to let out the stream of religious fervor. Christianity came to the Goths in the east much before (Ulfi and his Couds Argenteus) it came to Central Europe – possibly because the Goths who were ‘settled’ folk and hence civilised and more ‘amenable’ to newer trends of thoughts than the warring central European tribes – geographically too the Goths were closer to the middle east where Christianity originated. So Christianity not only was a great religious force but also a great political force when the kings accepted it and took the responsibility of proselatising it – in general it was the greatest unifying force of that time. This unity of political alliances, social stability and religious unity arrived in Central Europe with the advent of Christianity. The pagan gods of the warring tribes who had seen them hitherto through thick and thin began occupying lower places of honour and gradually fell back altogether. The chiefs and kings began solidifying their kingdoms by aligning themselves with the religious powers at Rome and acquiring their sanction. The Church at Rome was very powerful and is it a wonder then that religious fervor of new converts should pervade all spheres of literature? Except for the now extinct ‘Heldenlieder’ (Heroic songs collected and written down during Charlemagne’s time since before this these were a part of oral tradition) the ‘Edda’ and the “Volksbuch” nothing of that era of pre-Christian days remains. The two aspects of social life, i.e. the secular and the sacred were no two separate entities all that existed was sacred.

The new converts were very fervent and zealous, like all new converts are, and we see that their early literary arrangements were essentially religious, these were in poetry form and highly latinized – a more formal German linguistic form was lacking and the religious and formal language prescribed by Rome was Latin and hence this phenomenon. In a highly formal society with strong religious strictures, the passion and fervor of human mind finds its outlet in religious poetry. This particular character dominates this period; the powerful Church and Clergy tuned the early medieval society to this tune. There is only one woman who was glorified – of course in more personalised poems, since a bulk of poetry at that time was of a metaphysical and introspective nature – *Memento Mori* etc. – that was the virgin Mary, – we see ardent and worshipful praises addressed to her through *Mariendichtung Marienleben* by Priester Wernher (Augsburg 1172 A.D.) – and *Munchener Morgensegen* are both such kind of poetic arrangements. It is very interesting to see how this mood of worshipful ecstasy changed gradually with the passing of time – it, of course, did not strip the holy mother of her ‘worshipful’ dignity but elevated; the common woman to a place of honour and respect as a symbol of chastity and purity – all within 200 years!

When one looks at this basic change, one feels that certain historical occurrence might have been responsible for it. First of all with the death of Charlemagne and the slow

disintegration of his Empire, the strict religious tone of the society in general had begun to slacken somewhat. Charlemagne had been a highly religious man who not only worked in accord with the Pope, but named his Empire too as "Holy Roman Empire", sent his favoured religious order missionaries – the Benedictines, who incidentally also happened to be the most scholarly besides being very determined – abroad, to spread the Gospel. He germanised Latin prayers to bring them to the common man, thus binding him too closely to mother Church. Religious strictures were strict during his reign. After his death, with the Otto Kings and the Hohenstaufen dynasties ruling, the strictness of the moral and religious code changed. It allowed a "chink in its armour".

Secondly the literatures from other European countries in France and England had begun to infiltrate the German Cultural and literary scene. The Arthurian Romances of *Chretien de Troves* were sneaking in. They promoted the virtues of moral purity, loyalty piety and righteousness – they were akin to Christian virtues and were eagerly accepted, but then along with them crept in another factor, love of man for a woman which was also accepted by the society. Beautiful ladies and valiant knights heroes of the Crusades which has already begun, began to populate the literary scene. Worship and adulation also was by now offered to these beautiful women. The commencement of the crusades and the formulation of knightly orders might have been responsible for the tremendous popularity of these chivalrous Romances. "Romantic love" began to be accepted as a part and parcel of this chivalrous culture. Each crusader was a hero and to sing to his glory was the privilege of the society. Behind each hero, spurring him on, on his noble cause was a beautiful and gracious lady – a real or imaginary – from here began the elevation of woman – mortal and of flesh and blood – to this pedestal of glory, of adulation and worship. The holy land and the first holy Church was considered the Bride of Christ and the vindication of her honour the duty of each Believer. Since in this cause, a woman was the inspiration of 'her man', she too was ascribed with the same sacred value and the vindication of the honour of each woman the bounden duty of each knight. This worship on platonic basis gave rise to what is known as *Minnesang*. *Minne* was one of the seven virtues of a true knight, it was the quality to possess love, divine and platonic, *Sans Korper* for a gracious lady and one's readiness to die for the sake of this *Minne*. The *Minnesang* comes to us basically from the Troubadour (minstrel), culture of France (Province). It greatly influenced the German social, cultural and literary life. Literarily, socially, politically, culturally and intellectually this 'Chivalrous Era' seems to be the high water mark of Germany. East, with the trade routes established for Europe, seemed to come closer and the world seemed to Shrink. Alexanderlied (song) Ronalddie (song) etc., made their appearance on the literary horizon, above all Veldeke's *Eneit*. The years between 1190-1220 boast of a truly glorious German literature. The three main arrangements were the recapitulation of past events in the *volksepic*, then the *Hofischeepik* (courtlyepic) and the *Minnesang*.

The German literary language metamorphosed into a refined medium of expression at the hands of the masters of *Minne*. Every paradox and every nuance, of

solemnity and ludicrousity, mockery and anger to laughter were present. *Minnesang* was divided into two basic parts – *hohe Minne* (high-pure love) and *Niedere Minne* (lower non platonic love). *Minneklage* – lament of love, has also been added to *Minnesang*. The fourth and the last sub-variety of *Minnesang* and far from platonic is *Tagelied* which can be termed as *Abschiedslied* since it describes the despair at lovers' parting. We shall examine an example of each one of them below.

The first to subscribe for *Hohe Minne* was Friedrich von Hausen. Love and lament were the two aspects of his *Minnesang*. The poems that we shall examine here are of Dietmar von Eist, Heinrich von Morungen and Walther von der Vogelweide.

Reinmar von Hagenau took the art of *Minnesang* right upto Austria and Vienna, he prefers to imagine the subject and events of his writing rather than choosing them from life's Canvass.

*Uf der linden obene dā sanc ein Kleinez vogellin* – writes Dietmar von Eist – 'Upon the Linden tree Sang a little bird, the forest was lovely and once again my lonely condition (loneliness) seems to be clear (ly apparent) to me. The blooming Rose reminds me of a woman. *Es dunket mich wol tūsent jār das ich an liebes arme lac* – It seems to be a thousand years since I lay in the arms of my beloved. I have been left alone for a long time for no fault of mine. At such moments I see neither the blooming rose nor hear the bird song any more – *Sit was mir mīn frōide kurs und ouch der jāmer alzelanc* – Then my joy is so short and my misery so prolonged.

This is a typical example of a love-lorn unfortunate. The poem is introduced on the note of perfect harmony of nature, bird song in the otherwise hushed woods. It is spring since we see the blooming rose and the bird song both representing spring – the surroundings bring to life a deep and passionate longing in his heart for his beloved's presence and her embrace which he has not experienced – he counts her absence in thousands of years – for a long time. Once he begins to miss her the surrounding beauty the heady bird music hardly makes any impact on him. He only laments that his sorrows drown his short lived joy. She is not physically there but only in memory and thought. It can be termed as *Minneklage*.

The second poem by him is different in nature. It can be termed as a perfect *Tagelied* or *Abschiedslied*. He says that the little bird has warned us by waking us, that morning is here. He would rather bear all the pain and spare her it. His pain at their imminent parting is to be found in the last four lines of the poem – where he says :

‘Lady (beloved) you begin to cry,  
You ride away and leave me alone  
When will you come back to me here,  
for you lead away my joy with you  
That he will never be happy again until and unless  
she returns to him.

The poem by Heinrich von Morungen talks about the goodness of his lady love – he begins the poem by saying *Ich bin Keiser âne kröne – wor ir lîbe, diu mir sanfte tout*. ‘I am king without a crown and of no country’ – yet I am a king, ‘because she believes in me’. He thanks her for her sweetness and begs permission to always serve her. She is so good, he wishes that others would also find such noble ladies to serve. As one may notice, there is no mention of love, it is passionate gratitude on his part for the trust she has in him, and he only wishes for one favour, her permission to serve her. He pities those men who are not discerning enough and find even others not so noble worthy of serving.

The last stanza sort of makes a ‘volte face’ and starts talking about loves’ lament. He says that his heart is heavy within him due to unrequited love – he says ‘it comes through loves’ suffering’. He says that he can’t recognise himself any more. ‘I have become a stranger to him who was in my stead (myself as I was) before – Surely there must be a ground for this madness’. His choice of words (he who served for me (myself) he says) his lady love so far beyond his reach; he begs to be understood. But strangely behind his very passionate and human pleas there is a ‘religious’ fervor, religious, for it is the fervor expressed for his love’s goodness and virtue which are qualities divine and not for the beauty-physical or her graces – social, which are qualities human. It is the moral virtue in her that he adores and worships. His yearning is death-like in its totality – this yearning is typical of *Hohe Minne*.

Walther von der Vogelweide is quite a versatile poet, he writes on abstract philosophical topics like the virtues necessary to lead a happy life and he also writes some of the most tender love poems full of youth’s loving ecstasy and sweetness.

In the first poem, *ich saz ûf eine steine, und dahte bein mit beine* he tries to analyse the three virtues that make life good. Honour and goodness, covered with the grace of God are ideal he says but he is afraid that if one serves honour, goodness may be ignored and vice-versa, a golden medium – *mâze* – is hard to maintain. Though a most prized virtue of the knightly culture. He feels that striving for it is important because he feels that since disloyalty is the mood of the society and extortion rife on the pathways of life, all the three graces don’t find space in the human heart, but the warns against this dangerous trend and warns that ‘without all the three together, the remaining two will not make a happy union’.

His other poem given here is purely a Lovers’ poem, *under der linden, an der heide, dâ unser Zweier bette was*. He gives the vivid description of their flower bed on the Heath – ‘you will know where it was’ he says, ‘because the flowers and grasses are all trampled there’. *dâ mugt ihr vinden schöne beide, gebrochen bluomen unde gras*. With the presence of her love (since this is a poem through the mouth of a girl) and the nightingale, saying subtly that it was night time. She was ecstatic *Selic (selig)*, he makes the girl say.

'How red my lips are' she says, 'with the thousand kisses of my lover on them'. *Kuster mich? Wol tûsentstunt: seht wie rôl mir ist der munt.* She is thrilled by the bedsted of flowers that her lover has made. But she is not devoid of feminine modesty for she says how ashamed she would be if anyone were to come that way. Her passionate desire is that no one should know that they were there but the two of them and the little bird.

The purity, the healthy love and the joy of life and love together seems to pour out from every word-one involuntarily feels a smile of indulgence coming to one's lips.

Walther von der Vogelweide – his ladies are neither the unattainable ones of Morungen nor the unreal ones of Reinmar, he does not lament love like Fiedrich von Hausen nor plead like Dietmar von Eist for the love of his lady. He was the first to revolutionaries *Minne Sang* from the courtly platonic love to a personal and passionate love. He believed that *Minne ist sweier hersen wunne* (love is a wound of twin hearts). His *Minnesang* is a compromise between *Hohe Minne* (because of the purity of thought) and *niedere Minne* (because it is personalised and talks of human passions and love). It is balanced between *Liebe und Minne*. He freely talks about the rapture of love between man and woman.

Walther wrote also some political poems through his *Spruchdichtung* : He lived around 1170.

The 'Golden Period' between approximately 1190-1220 seemed to come rapidly to an end. The late medieval period saw the end of the crusades, the decline of the knightly order and the courtly Romance and the rise of *Burgerliche Kultur*. Unfortunately this stupendously prolific literary period changed over a new leaf too soon. German literature with the exception of Martin Luther – had to wait 500 years before Lessing's era and a new leaf of history in Golden letters could be written.

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# Beckett and Hemingway: A Stylistic Comparison

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N.M. RAO

Nothing is more real than nothing.

—Democritus

My long sickness of health and living now begins to mend and nothing brings me all things.

—Timon of Athens

A comparison of Beckett's use of language in drama and Hemingway's in fiction might appear gratuitous. The writer of fiction has to sustain an element of narration. He is also more dependent on language for his effects, not having communicative alternatives like gesture, mime, sound and light effects, which are available to the dramatist. On the other hand, the dramatist has to work in awareness of the continual presence of the audience. What the dramatist writes has not only to say but to show. In spite of these differences, there is some justification for drawing parallels between Beckett and Hemingway. Both show a deep awareness of the inadequacy of the linguistic medium, and both use the techniques like reduction and indirection in order to achieve unusual stylistic concentration, power and intensity. This paper attempts to analyse some of the linguistic devices used by the two writers, and to relate them to the effects achieved by them.

"My work is a matter of fundamental sounds made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for nothing else", says Beckett<sup>1</sup>, thus emphasizing the primacy of language in his drama as against all the theatrical elements used by him effectively. Yet, Beckett's attitude towards language is one of distrust. So is Hemingway's, as is evidenced by such remarks of his characters as "You'll lose it if you talk about it," in *The Sun Also Rises*, or "all our words, from loose using have lost their edge," in *Death in the Afternoon*. These writers know that they cannot depend on language to communicate fully. The artist, as Gombrich has pointed out, "cannot transcribe what he sees, he can only translate it into the terms of his medium."<sup>2</sup> This suggests the imperfection of language and the resistance that it offers to the artist. Similarly, Ernest Cassirer says, "Language harbours the curse of mediacy, and is bound to conceal what it seeks to reveal."<sup>3</sup> Both Beckett and Hemingway have an acute awareness of the failure of language to communicate to the reader the texture, quality and immediacy of experience. Beckett wrote, "art is the apotheosis of solitude. There is no communication because there are no vehicles of communication."<sup>4</sup> Later, in an article on van Veldes (1945), he remarked words are insufficient, "each time that one wishes to make words do a true work of transference, each time one wishes to make them express

something other than words, they align themselves in such a way as to cancel each other out.”<sup>5</sup> The inadequacy of language as a tool for communication is brought out even more specifically by Beckett in his plays. In *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon refuses to return to the ball of conversation because language fails him. But even when conversation takes place, communication may not be effective, as Beckett shows in *All That Fall*. “Do you find anything bizarre about my way of speaking?”<sup>6</sup> asks Mrs. Rooney. No wonder, because her attempts to communicate with the people around her have been in vain, and she concludes that she is “struggling with a dead language.”<sup>7</sup> In *Happy Days*, Winnie feels that “even words fail at times.”<sup>8</sup> Language may distort or miss the truth it should convey. “There is a little one can say it all. ...And no truth in it anywhere.”<sup>9</sup> This can happen even with a well-developed language like English. The very richness of a language like English can result in blurred impressions and abstractions. Ford Madox Ford tells us that Joseph Conrad was troubled by such a problem :

He used to declare that English was a language in which it was impossible to write a direct statement...All English words are instruments for exciting blurred emotions. “Oaken” in French means “made of oak wood” – nothing more. “Oaken” in English connotes innumerable moral attributes.<sup>10</sup>

These overtones make for vagueness of inexact expression.

There are other difficulties too. Literary art does not have language as an exclusive medium for its own use; it shares this with all discourse. Such a situation has disadvantages. Constant and careless use for varying purposes has turned words into worn-out imprecise tools. This is especially true of English. Hemingway regrets, “all our words from long use have lost their edge.”<sup>11</sup> They are unsuitable for the rigorous use to which he intended to put them. “A writer’s job is to tell the truth,” he declared in his introduction to *Men in War*. In a latter work he complained about the tendency that words have of distorting and falsifying “the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact” that he wanted to convey to his reader.<sup>12</sup> Hemingway’s distrust of language is also expressed in Frederick Henry’s denunciation of “abstract words such as glory, honor, courage,” which contrast with “concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.”<sup>13</sup> The disparity between words and things, between expressions and experiences, was difficult to bridge. The writer has to struggle with language if his aim is to communicate *the real thing*. Hemingway’s attitude here is comparable to Beckett’s. “No language is so sophisticated as English. It is a language abstracted to death.”<sup>14</sup> He reacted against this abstraction by writing in French,<sup>15</sup> where his style became so functional as to almost disappear. Later, the rigorous exercise of translation enabled him to achieve a like functional quality or bareness in English.

Both Hemingway and Beckett tried to evade abstraction in language by means of various devices. Hemingway used a process of reduction in order to “strip language clean



to lay it bare to the bone.”<sup>16</sup> He severely limited his vocabulary. His is a strictly selective and restricted vocabulary, consisting of relatively few and short words. For instance, he is sparing in his use of adjectives, though this may result, sometimes, in repetitions of “such uncertain monosyllables as *fine* and *nice*.”<sup>17</sup> But this economy makes for compression and directness. Hemingway regarded adjectives as more decorative than functional and so preferred nouns to adjectives. Also, “Hemingway puts his emphasis on nouns because, among parts of speech, they come closest to things. Stringing them along by means of conjunctions, he approximates the actual flow of experiences.”<sup>18</sup> These linguistic habits are illustrated in the following samples:

1. It was a fine clear afternoon, pleasant, not cold, with a light north breeze. It was a nice afternoon all right. The tide was running out and there were two pelicans sitting on the piling at the edge of the channel. A grunt fishing boat, painted dark green, changed past on the way around to the fish market, the Negro fisherman sitting on the stern holding the tiller. Henry looked out across the water, smooth with the wind blowing with the tide, grey blue in the afternoon sun, out to the sandy island formed when the channel was dragged where the shark camp had been located. There were white gulls flying over the island.

“Be a pretty night,” Harry thought. “Be a nice night to cross.”<sup>19</sup>

2. Romero never made any contortions, always it was straight and pure and natural in line. The others twisted themselves like corkscrews, their elbows raised, and leaned against the flanks of the bull after his horns had passed, to give a faked look of danger. Afterward, all that was faked turned bad and gave an unpleasant feeling.<sup>20</sup>

Hemingway also uses verbs sparingly. Harry Lavin remarks, “without much self-deprivation, Hemingway could get along on the so-called ‘operators’ of Basic English, the sixteen monosyllabic verbs that stem from movements of the body. The substantive verb *to be* is predominant, characteristically introduced by an expletive (e.g. ‘there was’, ‘there were’)<sup>21</sup>. Such reductions are Hemingway’s way of coming to terms with reality, and achieving immediacy.

Repetition is another linguistic device that both Hemingway and Beckett employ. Repetition is one way of economising words or reducing vocabulary. Hemingway uses repetition of words and details in order to achieve emphasis, immediacy, and a sense of ‘objectivity’, as in the example given below:

Of course they turned on you. They turned on you often but they always turned on every one. They turned on themselves, too. If you find three

together, two would unite against one, and then the two would start to betray each other. Not always, but often enough for you to take enough cases and start to draw it as a conclusion.<sup>22</sup>

Beckett uses repetition to a greater extent than Hemingway. The word *nothing* is used thirty times in *Waiting for Godot*, while other words frequently repeated are *Godot*, *silence*, *happy* and *pity*. Repetition has, sometimes, an echo-effect, as in the following dialogue:

VLADIMIR: And didn't they beat you?  
ESTRAGON: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.  
VLADIMIR: The same as usual?  
ESTRAGON: The same? I don't know.<sup>23</sup>

Sometimes, repetition becomes insistent and produces a cyclic effect:

CLOV: So you all want me to leave you?  
HAMM: Naturally.  
CLOV: Then I'll leave.  
HAMM: You can't leave us.  
CLOV: Then I won't leave you.  
HAMM: Why don't you finish us? I'll tell you the combination of the cupboard if you promise to finish me.  
CLOV: I couldn't finish you.  
HAMM: Then you won't finish me.<sup>24</sup>

Speaker, and sometimes context, confer variety on repetition. Repetition becomes, in these writers, a very useful stylistic device. "Repetitions of word and phrase insinuate their significance precisely because they avoid expansion and customary elaboration".<sup>25</sup> Repetition helps in the reduction process: "The little that stands before us stands sharply, brilliantly present; the rest is ruthlessly banished. ... We are in the huge and abrupt present, given to us without connectives or transitions."<sup>26</sup>

Reduction can also be seen Hemingway's syntax. This shows a sparing use of transformations. Very often Hemingway gives us a string of kernel sentences, as in the following passage:

"Listen," the detective said. "This isn't Chicago. You're not a gangster. You don't have to act like a moving picture."<sup>27</sup>

"Three or four times we waited for you to kill him. Pablo has no friends."

"I had the idea," Robert Jordon said. "Best I left it."

"Surely all could see it. Everyone noted your preparations. Why didn't you do it?"<sup>28</sup>

Now things were done. There had been this to do. Now it was done. It had been a hard trip. He was very tired. That was done. He made his

camp. He was settled. Nothing could touch him. It was a good place to camp. He was there in the good place.<sup>29</sup>

Hemingway's syntactic choices are also typical. He avoids involved sentence structures or sentence linked by cause-effect relationship. Instead, he prefers sentences conjoined to show sequence or co-ordinate clauses to embedding. We can observe such preferences in a piece of writing like the following:

She said nothing, and neither did he, and when the great bird had flown far out of the closed window of the gondola, and was lost and gone, neither of them say anything. He held her head lightly with his good arm and the other arm held the high ground now.<sup>30</sup>

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees too were dusty and the leaves fell early that year and we saw the troops marching along the road and the dust rising and leaves, stirred by the breeze, falling and the soldiers marching and afterward the road bare and white, except for the leaves.<sup>31</sup>

Often, intra-sentence and inter-sentence relationships are based on repetition or juxtaposition of phrases or clauses:

Nobody knows what tribes we come from nor what our tribal inheritance is nor what the mysteries were in the woods where the people lived that we came from. All we know is that we do not know. We know nothing about what happens to us in the nights. When it happens in the day though it is something.<sup>32</sup>

There were many more guns in the country around and the spring had come.<sup>33</sup> Such a rigid syntax gives us the impression of concentration: only the essentials of a situation are given.

Beckett's syntactic patterning, like Hemingway's, is simple. The characters of Beckett, especially in the earlier plays, speak very short sentences or even mono-syllables. Repetitive patterning is common, as in the following dialogue:

POZZO:	I can't bear it any longer ... the way he goes on ... you've no idea ... it's terrible ... he must go ... I'm going mad ... I can't bear it ... any longer ...
VLADIMIR :	He can't bear it.

ESTRAGON: Any longer.  
 VLADIMIR : He's going mad.  
 ESTRAGON : It's terrible.<sup>34</sup>

Beckett's most common syntactic device is the use of simple connectives, or the juxtaposition of clauses.

1. We have kept our appointments, and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment.<sup>35</sup>

One isn't master of one's moods. All day I've felt in great form. I didn't get up in the night.<sup>36</sup>

Sometimes Beckett's juxtaposes kernel sentences cleverly to create a sense of 'objectivity' as in the following example:

We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. ... But habit is a great deadener. ... At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on.<sup>37</sup>

This is an attempt by Vladimir to see his own situation as through the eyes of another person.

Though Beckett has a preference for kernels his style is not always free from transformations. For instance, adverbialization is a transform that Beckett uses frequently. The adverb slot in a sentence (S = NP + VP, where S stands for Sentence NP for Noun Phrase and VP for Verb Phrase), may be filled by either a single lexical item, a phrase, or a clause. For example in the sentence,

They crucified him + (adv.)

Transformations like the following are possible:

They crucified him + (quick/quickly)

They crucified him + (in warm weather)

They crucified him + (while it was warm)

The constituent sentence which fills the adverb slot in sentence 3 is embedded in the following manner :

1

Matrix (Then crucified him)

3

constituent: (It was warm)

2

Adv.

While

Transformation: 1 + 2

= 1 + while + 3 (right-branching)

= They crucified him while it was warm

Or,

while + 3 + 1 (left-branching),  
= while it was warm, they crucified him.

Or, the construction may be self-embedded,

They, while it was warm, crucified hi.

Beckett makes use of the first two transformations, as in,

Let us do something, while we have the chance.

Let us make the most of it, before it is too late.

But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not.<sup>38</sup>

However, Beckett's preference is for a lexical item to fill the adverb slot, as in,

They crucified (him) *quick*.<sup>39</sup>

Let's hang ourselves *immediately*.<sup>40</sup>

This habit is in conformity with his reductive technique.

The most common way of reducing the syntactic structure is by deletion of items. Such deletion, moreover, seems natural in the spoken form of language; it gives a quick and crisp quality to dialogue, as can be seen in the following examples:

- ESTRAGON :                    Is that the opposite (of what I said)?
- VLADIMIR :                    (It is a) Question of temperament.
- ESTRAGON :                    (It is a question) Of character.
- VLADIMIR :                    (There is) Nothing you can do about it.
- ESTRAGON :                    (It is) No use struggling.
- VLADIMIR :                    (It is no use struggling because) The essential  
   doesn't change.
- ESTRAGON :                    (There is) Nothing to be done.<sup>41</sup>

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MR. ROONEY:                    (Did you ever wish to) Nip some young doom  
   (when it was) in the bud? Many a time at night,  
   in winter, on the black road home, I nearly  
   attacked the boy. Poor Jerry! What restrained  
   me (from attacking him) then? (It was) Not  
   fear of man. Shall we go on backwards now a  
   little?

MRS. ROONEY:                    (Shall we go) Backwards?

MR. ROONEY:                    Yes. Or you (go) forwards and I (shall go)  
   backwards. (We will be) The perfect pair. (We  
   will be) Like Rantels damned.<sup>42</sup>

Deletion, in the writings of Hemingway and Beckett, is a very useful reductive device. "Deletion is a transformation that affects the deep structure to create more compact, concrete and elegant structures. Deletion is a minus action, it omits, effaces, erases and cancels."<sup>43</sup>

Reductive processes are applied to life as to language: both Beckett and Hemingway concern themselves with limited areas of life. Hemingway usually concentrates on physical details, sensations and actions, while Beckett focuses attention on life narrowed down by various restrictions. Hemingway's characters are men of action – fighters and hunters – confronting danger and death, and avoiding thinking. Beckett's characters are severely limited by their own physical disabilities as by situational and environmental constraints. They are really fractured characters encountering fractional situations. When Pozzo, in *Waiting for Godot*, asks Vladimir and Estragon who they are, they reply, "We are men." They are, however, "the diminished remnants of man, "they represent mankind reduced to the lowest level – "man reduced to the role of helpless, homeless, impotent comic."<sup>44</sup> They are tramps with nothing to do, waiting alone in the middle of nowhere for an impossible Godot. Life narrowed down by so many negatives is the experience conveyed by the play. *Waiting for Godot* begins with the words, "Nothing to be done", and much of the action in the play is self-cancelling. "Let's go", they say, but do not move. Beckett's use of a limited and austere vocabulary, with a predominance of mono-syllables, gives the dialogues in insistent bareness:

VLADIMIR:	...What are we doing here, <i>that</i> is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come –
ESTRAGON:	Ah!
POZZO:	Help!
VLADIMIR:	Or for night to fall. <sup>45</sup>

By means of such bare dialogue and minimal language, Beckett manages to give us an authentic portrayal of the experience during the process of *waiting*, which is better suggested by the French title *En Attendant Godot* than the English. The directness and immediacy of the play might have been lost with a richer or more varied vocabulary.

Reduction techniques in Hemingway and Beckett resist "abstraction", but such techniques are not always used to achieve *concrete* writing. "The term *concrete* is an inaccurate term to describe Hemingway's style,"<sup>46</sup> because beneath the hard surface is concealed an inner reality which is more important. Hemingway's writing, as Earl Rovit points out, "is an inevitable product of a writer who ...turned his view Internally."<sup>47</sup> For instance, the short story "The Killers" seems to present a factual report of a conspiracy, and of the refusal of the intended victim (Ole Anderson) to be roused even by the warning of death; but the story also gives us a glimpse into "hopelessness and despair, ...into a whole

widespread human predicament, deep in the grain of human affairs.”<sup>48</sup> In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Robert Jordan sacrifices life and love, and finds fulfillment in death. The courage of his heroes, their uncomplaining endurance of pain, and their readiness to face death, whether in battle or in bullring, are all aspects of the reality that Hemingway wants to reveal.

Hemingway prefers suggestion to statement; he says, “A writer... may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them.”<sup>49</sup> Here is a reductive technique to capture the maximum of reality with the minimal use of language. Hemingway’s own comment on this techniques is interesting; in an interview with George Plimpton in 1945, he said.

If it is any use to know it, I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg. It is the part that doesn’t show. If a writer omits something because he does not know it then there is a hole in the story. ... In writing you are limited by what has already been done satisfactorily. So I have tried to learn to do something else. ... I have tried to eliminate everything unnecessary to conveying experience to the reader.<sup>50</sup>

The iceberg metaphor aptly brings out the difference or contrast between statement and suggestion. Suggestion is a device widely used in literature, but in Hemingway and Beckett we have a very deliberate use of this both in semantic and syntactic terms. There are gaps in narrative or dialogue; sometimes apparently unrelated items are juxtaposed. The device of parataxis shows syntactic gaps and a preference for juxtaposition over exposition. The gaps in syntax or meaning do not create the sort of “holes” that Hemingway feared. Instead the reader’s imagination tends to bring out the connections forcefully. Suggestion here proves more effective than statement, explanation and comment. The syntactic and semantic arrangement gives the effect of an ‘objective’ presentation of events as they happen. An example is the kind of presentation one finds in Hemingway’s short story, “The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio.” The three referents in the title do not seem to have any connection with one another. Yet, as we read the story, the relationship of the three to the reality presented in the story becomes clear.

Hemingway frequently juxtaposes apparently unconnected ideas without specifying their relationship, sometimes using co-ordinate clauses bridged by a neutral connective like ‘and’ or ‘that’, as in the following examples:

There were signs on the walls of the churches saying it was forbidden to play pelota against them, and the houses in the villages had red, tiled roofs, and then the road turned off and commenced to climb and we

were going away up close along a hillside, with a valley below and hills stretched off backward toward the sea.<sup>51</sup>

"They look like white elephants," he said.

"I've never seen one," the man drank his beer.

"No you wouldn't have."<sup>52</sup>

The first of these passages seems to list a number of items of the scene as they claim the attention of someone who is driving through the town. The second example has an almost Beckettian brevity, and suggests the death of love more effectively than any description. The contrasts and the gaps in these pieces induce the reader to make the connections in his own mind.

Juxtaposition of phrases and clauses seems more natural in dialogue. In Beckett's dialogues we have gaps and silences. Winnie's short spurts of speech illustrate this very well:

Willie! ...Ah well, not to know, not to know for sure, great mercy, all I ask. ...Ah yes ...then ...now ...beechen green ...this ...Charlie ...kisses ...this ...all that ...deep trouble for the mind. ...But it does not trouble mine.<sup>53</sup>

The confusion of times and things, *then/now, this/that*, reflect the chaos of Winnie's world. In another work, Beckett gives us this exchange:

W: That poor creature who tried to seduce you, what ever became of her? ...  
M: Personally I always preferred Lipton's.<sup>54</sup>

Parataxis becomes more common in Beckett's later plays. For instance, the whole of *Not I* is a non-sentence of great syntactic daring. Once Mouth starts speaking, she cannot stop:

Now this ...something she had to tell...could that be it?... something that would tell ...how it was ...how she... what? ... had been? ...yes ...something that would tell how it had been ... how she had lived ... lived on and on ... guilty or not ... on and on ...<sup>55</sup>

Here the fractured and reduced syntax calls attention to itself; that is the chief effect of parataxis. It is also a perfect symbol of fractured and reduced man. Beckett applies the reductive process ruthlessly to his characters: Hamm is deprived of sight and movement, Winnie is half-buried, and Mouth is just mouth (only that is seen on the stage). In *Not I*, "humanity has shrunk to near anonymity."<sup>56</sup> This reduction is paralleled in dramatic expression: in *Waiting for Godot* there is dialogue, in *Happy Days* only the semblance of dialogue is maintained, while in *Not I* dialogue is abandoned for monologue. A similar process of reduction is applied to situation and action, so that what we get is not the experience of individuals as "the residue of human experience."<sup>57</sup> The minimal language



and situation achieve concentration and intensity. They diminish the importance of the personal element, and bring out “impersonal states of consciousness.”<sup>58</sup> All this serves the artistic purpose Beckett aimed at. The very minimal concrete reality and language that the drama presents on the stage, directs and concentrates our attention on the *inner* reality: *being*.

The use of juxtaposition and syntactic gaps in Hemingway and Beckett is aimed at creating a sense of immediacy. Language breaks in the intense concentration on the immediate, the present. Hemingway’s concern is with the immediate experience: to “live completely in the very second of the present minute with no before and no after.”<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere, he says, “There is neither yesterday, certainly, nor is there any tomorrow. ...There is only now.”<sup>60</sup> So does Beckett focus attention on the immediate experience, often creating a cyclical effect, as in the following dialogue:

POZZO:                Help!  
ESTRAGON:        Let’s go.  
VLADIMIR:        We can’t.  
ESTRAGON:        Why not?  
VLADIMIR:        We’re waiting for Godot.<sup>61</sup>

This can be compared with the following dialogue in a Hemingway short story, between the Old Waiter and the Young Waiter, who are speaking about an old man who frequents their restaurant,

- Last week he tried to commit suicide.
- Why?
- He was in despair.
- What about?
- Nothing.
- How do you know?
- He has plenty of money.<sup>62</sup>

Here, the interest of the waiters in the old man and their dialogue, is conveyed to us all their immediacy. Both Beckett and Hemingway, in their urgency to communicate experience, defy syntax and the linear progression in time of narrative. This defiance or conflict places a great strain on the language used in their writings:

Because words “take time” they are fundamentally ill-adapted to the task of defining any aspect of absolute reality, since all “reality” – in any metaphysical sense – is in the present, that is, instantaneous.<sup>63</sup>

The abrupt, broken, shifting style of Hemingway and Beckett forces the reader’s consciousness *into* the experience. In the impact thus made, there is little scope for contemplation.

Beckett uses a device to convey the immediacy of experience: he places linguistic expression in opposition to the action on the stage. The tramps in *Waiting for Godot*, for

instance, say, "Let's go"; this is contradicted by their refusal to move. The actions of the characters, as indicated by the stage directions in the play, contradicts their speech. Action stands for movement, which involves linear progression in time. But what we have in Beckett's plays is the absence of movement, even when the character's speech indicates the contrary. In fact, "the stage directions emphasize the dissolution of the coordinates of speech and deed."<sup>64</sup> The contradiction between speech and action helps Beckett – who is little concerned with presenting any outside reality – to create the experience of helplessness. The use of the present continuous tense in the title is significant. The tramps stand waiting, without past or future; they are unmistakably *there*. In the play, immediacy of the experience of waiting, *on attendant*, is communicated.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett concentrates our attention on the reality within by creating a closed world. We live wholly in the present, the *now*, which seems to be eternal. Godot may come after all, but that is a future event which is not allowed to intrude into this world. So Godot never comes in the play. Beckett takes the audience into this closed world (instead of going out to them), and gives it an experience of loneliness and *being*. Vladimir characterises this state of being in the play when he says, "The essential doesn't change."<sup>65</sup> Change indeed seems to be banished: there is neither more individual occurrence nor sequence. Estragon's inquiry about an occurrence (which could have taken us to the past) is quickly answered by Pozzo's "One day, is that not enough?" form of narration, because time is seen to cyclic and eternal instead of linear and progressive. Cyclic time forces the characters to live continually in the present – not even death is a way out – to remain *being there*. This view of time, this closed world, is reflected both in the structure and language of the play.

The two acts of *Waiting for Godot* repeat almost the same pattern. Characters, their activities and speeches too are repetitive. Estragon is like an echo of Vladimir, hats and boots are put on and off, speeches like "Let's go," and "We're waiting for Godot" are spoken over and over again. Anaphora right at the beginning of the play, for example, "resumed the struggle", "again", suggest repetition of something that has already been done. In the cyclic form of the play, there is no beginning or end. The song which opens Act II symbolizes the circularity of the play. What is true of *Waiting* is also true of other plays like *Endgame* and *Happy Days*.

In his plays, Beckett tends to turn even language into a closed system. Usual language directs our attention to something outside itself – an object or an event, a situation or an emotion, which can be verified at least in a general way. That is, language has, normally, a referential quality. This is particularly true of dramatic language. Dramatic communication tends to become a shared event because of the audience which receives it. In the language of both Hemingway and Beckett, there is an attempt to reduce this referential quality, so that it may "purify itself from all reference."<sup>65</sup> Instead, such writing makes us look to something *within* the literary work. However, Hemingway is still mimetic to an extent, probably because of the necessity to tell a story and because of his commitment to external

reality. That is, there is a certain "referential" element in his writing. But in Beckett we have a situation where reality can no longer be recorded. Beckett does not imitate the world, but constructs a way of looking into it in order to find its meaning. "There is no mimesis, only poesis."<sup>66</sup> Critics, particularly those who associate him with the Absurd Theatre see in Beckett a failure of language, breakdown in communication. But such a breakdown does not take place; instead, "the failure of language has served Beckett as a myth *for* creation."<sup>67</sup> Beckett achieves, in many ways, the recreation of language through its seeming failure. The intensity and power of Beckett's dramatic language is evident. Reductive methods are used to so control the wornout language that it "gains 'new life' within the context of the play."<sup>68</sup> Beckett does what he praised Joyce for achieving: "a quintessential extraction of language" where the words "are alive."<sup>69</sup> Kennedy gives Lucky's speech in *Waiting for Godot* as an example of such creativity in Beckett:

The speech is placed and organised in such a way that the pathological breakdown in language – the agony of lost meaning – becomes a source of creative energy in the play ... The deteriorating syntax releases, as through fission, isolated word-clusters which sound like the lost 'true voice' in the speech. ... Though Lucky is destructively silenced his language works creativity within the play.<sup>70</sup>

Another way of achieving intensity is by means of a conscious lyricism. This lyricism is seen in some of Beckett's word clusters and rhythms, as in Pozzo's, "It is pale and luminous like any sky at this hour of the day,"<sup>71</sup> or in Mr. Rooney's, "There is a bank, let us sink down upon a bank."<sup>72</sup> In his dialogues, Beckett sometimes substitutes rhythm or stichomythy for logical links, as in the following:

ESTRAGON:	All the dead voices.
VLADIMIR:	They make a noise like wings.
ESTRAGON:	Like leaves.
VLADIMIR:	Like sand.
ESTRAGON:	Like leaves. <sup>73</sup>

There is no logical or thematic development here, the similes for the dead voices are more significant as sound than as sense. Later, in *Play*, Beckett substitutes stichomythy for the give-and-take of dialogue throughout. Another device used by Beckett is what Winnie in *Happy Days* calls "the old style", the high rhetoric of poetry, the linguistic remnants of a past culture. Beckett has parodied and exploited poetic language, creating allusive and ironic effects. Shelley's lines on the moon are woven by Estragon into his talk about boots:

VLADIMIR:	What are you doing?
ESTRAGON:	Pale for weariness.
VLADIMIR:	Eh?
ESTRAGON:	Of climbing heaven and gazing on the likes of us.
VLADIMIR:	Your boots. What are you doing with your boots?

ESTRAGON:

I'm leaving them there ...<sup>74</sup>

Beckett's drama is full of literary echoes. Poetical words or phrases gain a new life and intensity when placed in an unexpected context. Montage is a technique which has been used by several modern writers, particularly T.S. Eliot. But in Beckett, even this *poesis* is subjected to reduction, "the revitalised language itself is running down."<sup>75</sup> The lyricism quickly degenerates into what Estragon calls talking "about nothing in particular."<sup>76</sup> In order to continue their dialogue, Vladimir and Estragon try various expedients like playing language games, acting Pozzo and Lucky, and a ritual of courtesies and curses. But all this can hardly help them in evading silence, as they themselves confess:

ESTRAGON: That's enough. I'm tired.

VLADIMIR: We're not in form.<sup>77</sup>

This linguistic exhaustion can be observed in other plays too. Winnie, in *Happy Days*, fears that "words fail, there are times when even they fail."<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, she tries to maintain what seems to be an endless flow of talk. However, like her toothpaste, Winnie's store of words is running out. By the end of the play, she realizes this and clings to the few objects she has with her in the hope that they at least would not fail her: "Do not overdo the bag."<sup>79</sup> In *Play*, speech starts or stops at the bid of spotlight. Even so, the spiraling dialogue reaches towards exhaustion. *Play* attempts to evade silence by repeating itself. Thus, reduction applied to lyricism seems to lead to silence.

Reduction works in another way too. In his dramatic language Beckett brings about a tension between "what is irreducibly public in drama (which) gives a concreteness to the words" and the tendency "away from everybody speech, towards an internal purity."<sup>80</sup> Beckett forces the latter, the movement of systematic *say-less*, further and further in a bid to make it non-referential and pure. This reminds us of the Symbolist attempt to "purify" language, or to thin the barrier that language becomes in reaching reality. In their attempts to reveal unmediated reality, poets like Mallarmé and Valéry attained total opacity or silence. It is possible to regard the reductive methods of Hemingway and Beckett as part of an inner movement, within language, that began with the French Symbolists; it is a movement from implication and suggestion towards minimal language and silence. The regression towards silence may also be regarded as a movement towards reality. Ihab Hassan says, "Beckett reduces, he never simplifies."<sup>81</sup> This is because Beckett wants to give us the unmediated or transparent reality. The Symbolists, too, had attempted to reach reality *in* and *through* language, to break the barrier of language to reveal unmediated reality. But that attempt could also lead to total opacity as with Mallarmé, or to silence, as with Valéry. Beckett's efforts to reach the reality within is both metaphysical and linguistic. His dramatic method increasingly becomes

a contraction,...immersive, a contraction of the spirit, a descent,...shrinking from the nullity of extra-circumferential phenomena, drawn into the core of the eddy...<sup>82</sup>

Beckett, in his plays, seeks the core of the *eddy*, or more truly of the onion. Earlier, in his book on Proust, Beckett had observed that "the heart of the cauliflower or the ideal core of the onion represent a more appropriate tribute to the labours of poetical excavation than the crown of bay."<sup>83</sup> That is Beckett's dramatic method: it is like peeling an onion, layer after layer, till it reaches within to the emptiness at the core.

Both Hemingway and Beckett have been fascinated by silence and nothingness as the ultimate reality. In Hemingway's writings nothingness is associated, as Baker has pointed out, with night, disorder, not-home. Many of Hemingway's characters have experienced the terror of the meaninglessness of existence, or nothingness. "A Clean Well-lighted Place" brings out man's sense of *nada* or nothingness, and his attempts to avoid a confrontation with it. The old waiter, who has himself sleepless nights in this experience, wants to provide a clean, well-lighted place as a refuge to all solitary men (like the old Spaniard) who have experienced the terror of *nada*. But knowledge of it was greater than the terror. The old waiter voices Hemingway's own attitude to this reality: "What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too."<sup>84</sup> In another short story, "The Gambler, the Nun and the Radio," Hemingway had distinguished three different levels of reality. While the Gambler has his courage and the nun her faith, Mr. Frazer has *the horrors* of the void, which he tries to keep out by listening to the radio all night. In another story, "A Way You'll Never Be," Nick Adams encountering nothingness finds that he "can't sleep without a light of some sort." On the other hand, a hero like Colonel Cantwell in *Across the River and Into the Trees* faces the void fearlessly, and does not attempt to avoid it. He tries to contemplate nothingness, "as he had thought of nothing so many times in so many places."<sup>85</sup> He dies while contemplating nothingness. Is this story to be interpreted as ending in nothingness, or as showing the sacrifice (of a life) that a man has to make in his confrontation with of nothingness? Hemingway leaves us in uncertainty. Even the fear of *nada* that his characters show can be mysterious or "wrenched back by a final twist into the realm of the recognizable."<sup>86</sup> The old waiter in "A Clean Well Lighted Place" concludes that the terror of *nada* might be, after all, "probably only insomnia. Many must have it." In Hemingway, thus, there is an ambiguity about the attitude to the ultimate reality. *Nada* can be the nothingness or meaninglessness of the physical world, or the mystery of existence in facing which language lapses into silence.

Hemingway's *nada*, Sartre's *le neant*, Heidegger's *Das Nichts*, and Beckett's void or nothingness are all related. But the encounter with nothingness may evoke different responses. Hemingway's response has been interpreted by some as existentialist, but the agony was a reaction more akin to mental derangement than *l'angoisse* of Sartre, and it resulted in suicide. On the contrary, Beckett seems to say no to nothingness; his response is neither suicide nor silence. For him, death is no way out of the anguish. Vladimir and Estragon contemplate but do not commit suicide, while in *Play*, the anguish seems to continue even after death. Nor does Beckett lapse into silence. One view of Beckett's work is that

it tends towards silence without actually reaching it. Andrew Kennedy says,

Each play is a cyclical rundown, and the plays taken together can be seen to move towards a minimal language. The language of drama is itself taken by Beckett to an extreme point, towards the zero point which – as in the third law of thermodynamics – can only be approached asymptotically: getting ever closer to it without ever reaching it.<sup>87</sup>

But another view is also tenable. Beckett maybe regarded as having achieved the Husserlian transcendence, finding Being in Nothingness, which again is akin to Heidegger's idea of new creation out of nothingness. It is true Beckett seemed to have reached the end of his quest from reality when he confronted nothingness: he was like a man "on his knees, head against the wall – more like a cliff – with someone saying, 'go on' – Well, the wall will have to move a little, that's all."<sup>88</sup> The wall does move. Even nothingness and silence become creative, challenging language to function. Then, Beckett finds that "the only way one can speak of nothing is to speak of it as though it were something."<sup>89</sup> Beckett seems to have realised the possibility that J. Hillis Miller pointed out of nihilism preparing for creativity: "Nihilism is the nothingness of consciousness when consciousness becomes the foundation of everything."<sup>90</sup> However, Beckett characterises his approach to the ultimate reality as that of a writer rather than of a philosopher. He says,

When Heidegger and Sartre speak of a contrast between being and existence, they may be right, I don't know. But their language is too philosophical for me. I am not a philosopher.<sup>91</sup>

He is not a philosopher, but he is well acquainted with philosophy. Thus, while accepting Democritus' view that 'Nothing is more real than nothing,' – which has affinities with the Existentialist and Phenomenological views – he insists that nothing reveals itself as everything or the Mess. This mess or chaos is somewhat akin to the Buddhist view of the paradoxical coexistence of nothing and everything in *Shunya*. In an interview, Beckett told Tom Driver,

One cannot speak any more of being, one must speak only of the mess... One can only speak of what is in front of him, and that now is simply the mess.<sup>91</sup>

Beckett's plays attempt to communicate the mess. If that were all, he could be considered an Absurdist, but he goes beyond that aim. His characters, in spite of all their limitations and restraints, have 'the courage to be'. If there is also terror in his plays there is also compassion, if there is despair there is also courage. It is this transcendence that gives Beckett's drama its intensity and power.

Beckett's dramas, with their highly stylized structure, embody the tension between the mind's need for order and the mess that it encounters. One of the important aspects in

making sense of the mess, or accommodating it as Beckett puts it, is the cyclical character of time, a concept which has roots in ancient Greek, Hindu and Buddhist philosophies. The cyclical and repetitive structure of Beckett's plays is based on this concept, which has also been explained in terms of the myth of regeneration by modern thinkers like Northrop Frye and Mircea Eliade. The concept of cyclical time also owes much to Bergson and Einstein. It has been accepted and used by several twentieth century writers including Yeats and Eliot.

Beckett's writings show that he has made use of diverse ideas of philosophers from Plato of Democritus to the Existentialists, but he cannot be regarded as the follower of any particular philosophy. As John Pilling says,

Some of the parallels critics seek are forced and irresponsible.... We should value his work for its idiosyncratic and individual approach to some of the most complex and unsolved problems of mankind.<sup>92</sup>

The approach is all part of the artist's endeavour to reveal reality. What is remarkable is the attempt to make order in the form of fundamental sounds.

### Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> "Letters on *Endgame*" in *Village Voice*, March 19, 1958, quoted by Ihab Hassan in *The Literature of Silence*, (New York: Knopf & Co., 1967), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> *Art and Illusion*, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Language and Myth*.

<sup>4</sup> *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*, (London, 1965), p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by John Pilling in *Samuel Beckett*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> *All That Fall*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> *Happy Days*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), p.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> *Joseph Conard, a Personal Remembrance*, quoted by Pilling, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Death in the Afternoon*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>13</sup> *A Farewell to Arms*, Ch. XXVII.

<sup>14</sup> *Our Examination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, (London, 1935), p.15.

<sup>15</sup> The foreign language may also have helped him to achieve a sense of distance and objectivity in his writings.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Putnam, *Paris was our Mistress*, (New York, 1947), p. 128.

<sup>17</sup> Harry Levin, "Observations on the Style of Earnest Hemingway", in Howard S. Babb (ed.) *Essays in Stylistic Analysis*, (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 329.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>19</sup> *To Have and Have Not*, Ch. XXVI.

- <sup>20</sup> *The Sun Also Rises*, Ch. XV.
- <sup>21</sup> Babb, pp. 330-331.
- <sup>22</sup> *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Ch. XI.
- <sup>23</sup> *Waiting for Godot*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), p. 9.
- <sup>24</sup> *Endgame*, (Faber, 1970), p. 29.
- <sup>25</sup> Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 89.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- <sup>27</sup> Hemingway, "The Gambler, the Nun and the Radio".
- <sup>28</sup> *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Ch. V.
- <sup>29</sup> Hemingway, "Big Two-Hearted River".
- <sup>30</sup> Hemingway, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, Ch. V.
- <sup>31</sup> *A Farewell to Arms*, Ch. I.
- <sup>32</sup> *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, ch. XIII
- <sup>33</sup> *A Farewell to Arms*, Ch. III.
- <sup>34</sup> *Waiting for Godot*, p. 34.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- <sup>42</sup> *All That Fall*, p. 31.
- <sup>43</sup> Maire Jaanus Kurrik, *Literature and Negation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 206.
- <sup>44</sup> Eric Bentley in Lawrence Graver & Raymond Federman (d.). *Samuel Beckett. The Critical Heritage*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 110.
- <sup>45</sup> *Waiting for Godot*, p. 80.
- <sup>46</sup> Richard K. Peterson, *Hemingway Direct and Oblique*. (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p. 26.
- <sup>47</sup> Earl Rovit, *Ernest Hemingway*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1963), p. 165.
- <sup>48</sup> Carlos Baker, *Hemingway, The Writer as Artist*. (Princeton, 1973), p. 123.
- <sup>49</sup> *Death in the Afternoon*, Ch. XVI.
- <sup>50</sup> Hemingway in *The Paris Review*, XVIII (1958), quoted by Peterson, p. 106.
- <sup>51</sup> *The Sun Also Rises*, Ch. X.
- <sup>52</sup> "Hills Like White Elephants".
- <sup>53</sup> *Happy Days*, (London: Faber, 1976), p. 38.
- <sup>54</sup> *Play*, (London: Faber, 1971) p. 18.
- <sup>55</sup> *Mouth*, (London: Faber, 1975), p.
- <sup>56</sup> Elia Diamond, "The Fictionalizers in Beckett's Plays", in Ruby Cohn, (ed.), *Samuel Beckett*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975), p. 116.
- <sup>57</sup> Ruby Cohn, *Back to Beckett*. (Princeton, 1976), p. 272.



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- <sup>58</sup> Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*. (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1966), p. 101.
- <sup>59</sup> Hemingway's introduction to *Men at War*. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1942), p. xxvii.
- <sup>60</sup> *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Ch. XIII.
- <sup>61</sup> *Waiting*, p. 78.
- <sup>62</sup> "A Clean, Well Lighted Place".
- <sup>63</sup> Richard Coe, *Samuel Beckett*. (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 17.
- <sup>64</sup> Wolfgang Iser, "Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Language" in *Modern Drama*, 9.3. December 1966, p.
- <sup>65</sup> *The Literature of Silence*, p. 206.
- <sup>66</sup> Robert Scholes, "The Fictional Criticism of the Future," quoted by Gerald Graff, *Literature Against Itself*, (Chacago, 1979), p. 172.
- <sup>67</sup> Andrew K. Kennedy, *Six Dramatists in Search of a Language*, (Cambridge, 1976), p. 135.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- <sup>69</sup> *Our Examination*, pp. 17-18.
- <sup>70</sup> Kennedy, pp. 139-140.
- <sup>71</sup> *Waiting*, p. 37.
- <sup>72</sup> *All That Fall*, p. 32.
- <sup>73</sup> *Waiting*, p. 62.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- <sup>75</sup> Kennedy, *Six Dramatists*, p. 144.
- <sup>76</sup> *Waiting for Godot*, p. 66.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>80</sup> *Six Dramatists*, p. 136.
- <sup>81</sup> Hassan, *The Literature of Silence*, p. 206.
- <sup>82</sup> *Proust*, pp. 65-66.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- <sup>84</sup> "A Clean Well Lighted Place".
- <sup>85</sup> Hemingway, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, p. 230.
- <sup>86</sup> Baker, *Hemingway*, p. 141.
- <sup>87</sup> *Six Dramatists*, p. 137.
- <sup>88</sup> Quoted by Grover and Federman, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 29.
- <sup>89</sup> *Watt*, quoted in *Samuel Beckett, The Critical Heritage*, p. 138.
- <sup>90</sup> *Poets of Reality*, (Harvard, 1965), p. 3.
- <sup>91</sup> *Samuel Beckett, The Critical Heritage*, p. 219.
- <sup>92</sup> John Pilling, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 158.

# A Confluence: Synge's *Deirdre of Sorrows* and Karnard's *Hayavadhana*

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SURESH FREDERICK

John Millington Synge's *Deirdre of Sorrows*, is his last and incomplete play. This was published posthumously. Synge borrowed the plot from an Irish legend, *The Fate of the Children of Uisneach*. Synge has given a new face to the legend. His characters do not speak an old and archaic language but wear a contemporary outlook. "Synge wishes to break through the insulation, the stereo-types, surrounding contemporary discussions of the myths, to see the characters not as mystical or heroic, but as men and women motivated by the same needs and fears, piety and great that we are..." Observer Weldon Thornton (146). As per Michael H. Bengel: "...he (Synge) transformed his royal characters into beings who speak and who are motivated in ways that would be familiar to a contemporary audience" (Kopper 88). Girish Karnard has taken his plot for *Hayavadhana* from Mann's translation of *Kathasaritsagara*, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit. Karnard also presents a contemporary look to the ancient story. S. Karisha Bhatta says, "...Karnard attempts to interpret... myth from an angle of the contemporary society"(186). The story is also relevant to the modern world. M.K. Naik says that Karnard's story "has an urgent relevance to present day thinking about man and his world"(191). So, both plays are from ancient mythic origins but wear a contemporary out-look and are relevant to the modern world.

In *Deirdre of Sorrows*, Deirdre is loved by Naisi, a hunter and Conchubor, the High King of Ulster. Naisi and Conchubor are relatives, Anne Saddlemyer calls Naisi a "Warrior as well as a hunter"(Ayling 204). Conchubor himself declares, "The like of me has a store of knowledge..."(Synge 283). Naisi is physically strong, whereas Conchubor is old but, intelligent. Conchubor, being the king is highest in the hierarchy and Naisi being a hunter, low. In *Hayavadhana*, Padmini is loved by Devadatta, a man of intellect and Kapila, a blacksmith. Devadatta and Kapila are friends. "Devadatta, a man of intellect and Kapila, a man all body are close friends..."(Bhatta 189). Devadatta is an educated man and a scholar. He is "...comely in appearance, fair in colour, unrivalled in intelligence"(Karnard 2). Kapila is uneducated but has a strong physique. "He is dark and plain to look at ... in strength and physical skills, he has no equal" (Karnard 2). In the social hierarchy "Devadatta's name stresses his primacy in social hierarchy" (Naik 195). Kapila is placed low, ".....as far as the social hierarchy is concerned, he is certainly the bottom dog" (Naik 196). Thus both Naisi and Kapila are strong men, and Conchubor and Devadatta are intelligent persons. Both the playwrights have connected their male characters, Naisi and Conchubor, and Devadatta and Kapila, with relationships. In the social hierarchy, Conchubor and Devadatta are placed in a higher strata and Naisi and Kapila in a lower plane.

“Strong” Naisi knows that if he loves Deirdre, there would be lot of bloodshed. Still, he boldly loves her. He is ready to marry her. Naisi says “Yet it’s a poor thing it’s should bring you to a tale of blood and broken bodies, and the filth of the grave...” (Synge 298), Anne Saddlemyer says, “Perhaps he has more to lose... he knows long before the untidiness of death...” (Ayling 204). Knowing fully about the might of Conchubor, Naisi has no hesitation in saying “yes” to Deirdre’s proposal. “Intelligent” Devadatta also loves Padmini very much, he substantiates this by saying, “I swear, Kapila, with you as my witness I swear, if I ever get her as my wife, I’ll sacrifice my two arms to the goddess Kali, I’ll sacrifice my head to Lord Rudra” (Karnard 14). Thus swearing, Devadatta makes the situation difficult for himself. He goes on to marry Padmini. Being fully aware of the consequences, both Naisi and Devadatta choose their spouses. Naisi is ready to face death and Devadatta is ready to give himself up as a sacrifice. So, both Naisi and Devadatta are ready to face death boldly. The choice, in both cases, is clearly fatal.

When Deirdre wants to go to Emain, Naisi hesitates to take a positive decision. He is reluctant to go back to Emain because Conchubor is there. He answers Fergus, “...we’re better this place...” (Synge 310) and he also says, “We’ll stay this place till our lives and time are worn out” (Synge 312). But when Deirdre insists on going to Emain, Naisi says, “Come away Deirdre, and it’s little we’ll think of safety or the grave beyond it...” (Synge 315). Naisi also says, “If a near death is coming what will be my trouble losing the earth and stars over it, and you, Deirdre are their flame and bright crown?” (Synge 315-6). Even though Naisi feels that it is unsafe there, he feels that Deirdre is more important than his safety. Eugene Benson says, “...Naisi seeks to persuade Deirdre not to return to Emain Macha even though it is clear she will do so” (43). Deirdre persuades him to go to Emain, so he goes there. In *Hayavadhana*, Padmini wants to go to Ujjain, but Devadatta is not interested in that trip. He says, “Padmini, I’ve told you ten times—not to face such hazards (of traveling)... But you won’t listen...” (Karnad 20). One of the reasons for Devadatta opposing this trip is Kapila accompanying them. Padmini also agrees not to go to Ujjain, but suddenly when Kapila comes with a cart, she decides to go to Ujjain. Devadatta is disappointed but he does not reveal that. He goes with her. So, both Naisi and Devadatta are not interested in their trips but make them only because of their wives and to please them.

In *Deirdre of Sorrows*, Naisi and Deirdre reach Emain Macha where Naisi is killed by Conchubor’s men. Deirdre commits suicide and falls into the greave where the bodies of her husband Naisi and other lay. In *Hayavadhana*, on the way itself Devadatta remembers his prose to Kali and the story takes a different turn, but at the end, both Devadatta and Kapila die in a duel. Padmini decides to commit suicide by falling into “sathi fire”. So, at the end, both Deirdre and Padmini die at the feet of their dead husbands.

In both plays, two men love a lady; the love triangle is there. Naisi and Devadatta are ready to face death without any hesitation to attain their loved ones. Initially both of them are against their trips but both of them go on with their trips because of their wives. At the end Naisi dies in the fight with Conchubor’s men and Deirdre commits suicide and

Devadatta dies in the fight with Kapila and Padmini ends her life by performing Sathi. Thus there are analogous elements in these two plays.

The societies presented in these plays are different. J.M. Synge's play is based on an Irish legend and Girish Karnard's play on an Indian myth. The plot and technique used by the playwrights are different. But one can see many similar elements in these plays. Gilbert Murray on comparing *Hamlet* and *Orestes* says, "... I suspect, strange, unanalyzed vibration below the surface, an undercurrent of desires and fears and parsims, long slumbering yet eternally familiar, which have for thousands of years lain near the root of our intimate emotions and have been wrought into the fabric of our most magical dreams" (Scott 281). These have also brought *Deirdre* and *Hayavadhana* together.

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Dept. of English  
Bishop Heber College  
Trichy-620017

## Book Reviews

**Ananta Ch. Sukla. *Art and Experience*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003, 302 pages.**

Critical in its approach, comprehensive in its vision, and instructive in its impact, this anthology is an important contribution to the study of the concept of experience in art, science and religion. What does it mean to experience an artwork? How does this sort of experience differ from the experience of nature or the religious experience? This anthology is an exploration of the foundation of aesthetic appreciation and judgment. A large number of philosophers in the second half of the twentieth century practically banned the concept of experience from the analysis of the nature of art and the aesthetic as such. But this censure has lost its hold during the past few years; it has become clear that "experience" is indispensable for the analysis of the basic aesthetic concepts, views and methodologies. The question which cannot escape our attention is: can we theorize on what makes an object art or whether an artwork is good or tragic or the role it plays in human life if we do not in some way perceive or feel, i.e. "experience", the work? Ananta Sukla has rendered a great service to the contemporary analysis of the concepts of art and the aesthetic by restoring the category of experience to its proper place. It is, as Sukla says, an epistemic concept; as such, it is a principle of explanation. The philosophers he has invited to study the concept of experience and art are distinguished scholars. The topics which they discuss are: scientific and religious experience, the experience of language, the experience of nature and the experience of art, pictorial experience, the experience as art, the experience of literary works, the experience of music, the experience of dance, aesthetic experience nature and the experience of art in Indian aesthetics, the experience of photography and film. I shall in what follows throw light on some of these topics.

In chapter one, "Scientific Experience and Religious Experience", Keith Yandell begins his discussion of scientific experience and religious experience by pointing out that not all experiences have objects. Those which have objects are structural in character. Yandell calls them intentional. Thus we may distinguish two types of experience, intentional and non-intentional. Scientific and religious experiences are intentional in structure. A scientific experience is a perceptual experience of a physical object; it refers to "sensory experience within certain constraints, roughly, to visual, tactual, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory experiences of a sort that can be had under predictable conditions by any appropriately gifted or 'normal' observer...an experience is scientific only if it is sensory and public" (p. 4). Scientific experience is the basis of propositions; it alone warrants scientific claims and justification. Like scientific experience, religious experience is intentional. Here the experience of the intentional object is evidence that the object exists. Accordingly, "intentional religious experiences—centrally experiences in which people seem to experience God—are evidence that God exists" (p. 16). But in order for these experiences to be valid, Yandell argues, they should be accompanied by a "successful version of the cosmological or ontological argument" (Ibid.). Though interesting, this account of religious experience leaves much to be desired, for a critic might insist: regardless of how valid or convincing a cosmological or an ontological argument might be such an argument cannot establish existence. This point was made amply clear by Kierkegaard sometime ago.

In chapter two, "Experiencing Nature and Experiencing Art," T.J. Diffey argues that although the dichotomy between art and nature "must increasingly be called into question" (p. 45), our experience of them is basically asymmetrical, though not necessarily antithetical: what it means to experience an artwork is different from our experience of nature. Diffey starts his discussion of this thesis by rejecting the Kantian account of aesthetic judgment, because it distorts our experience of the artwork. It treats the work "as if it were a natural object" (p. 43). But artworks are not anymore imitations of nature and they do not have to be "beautiful" to be art. The creation of beauty is not the end of art: "the traditional continuity between art and nature, to be found in Kant's aesthetics, is in terms of their beauty; the modern discontinuity between art and nature is in terms of art" (p. 50). The art work is a creation of the human imagination; nature is given. This does not mean that an artist may not create beautiful artworks; no, it only means that "beauty is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition

of art" (p. 44). Accordingly the judgment of beauty does not apply indifferently to artworks and nature. Consequently the symmetry "between the aesthetics of art and the aesthetics of nature" (Ibid.) would be disrupted, because what used to unite them, viz., beauty, does not exist anymore. It would, then, be more appropriate to speak of the experience of nature and the experience of art. And if this is the case, then we should dissociate the concept of art from the concept of the aesthetic. We can experience a work as art without necessarily experiencing it aesthetically. This is a problematic conclusion for at least two reasons: (1) can we experience an object as art without necessarily experiencing the aesthetic properties which make it art? Is Diffey willing to say that "art" is a neutral concept? (2) For Kant and others philosophers, nature is not only beautiful; it can be colossal, horrible, dreamy, peaceful, exhilarating, and so forth. We do not experience nature; we experience parts of nature, even though these parts are always clearly delimited. We should grant the distinction Diffey makes between art and nature, but still we can experience both aesthetically.

The distinction between art and nature reaches its highest articulation in Hegel's philosophy of fine art. For Hegel, the beauty of nature is generically different from the beauty of art; the latter is superior to the former. He, moreover, asserts "that artistic beauty stands higher than nature. For the beauty of art is the beauty that is born—born again, that is—of the mind" (p. 51). The recession of beauty from the domain of art has made the break between art and nature complete; it has established, on Hegel's hands, the superiority of art over nature. It has led to the contemporary view that "the notion of the aesthetic is conceptually dependent on art" and without it there would be no concept of the aesthetic (p. 52).

In chapter seven, "The Experience of Music," Stephen Davies discusses the experience of music from the listener's point of view, the listener who is literate or skilled in listening to music, the listener "who is aware of where bits begin and end, of prominent melodies and motifs, of repeats, variations, and developments, of the waxing and waning of musical tension...and, where appropriate, of the music's expressive tone, its symbolic character, and its referential or quotational nature" (p. 109). This sort of listener does not have to share the musical knowledge of the composer, the musicologist, or the musician in order to understand the music she hears. The truth expressed in the music is unique, but not ineffable, and what makes it unique is not the truth it expresses but the way it expresses it. But, Davies asks: "can we experience music as the composer's contemporaries did" (p. 111)? Yes, to a good extent. Listening to music is historically contextualized; accordingly the contemporary music lover may not experience, let us say, a Baroque piece the way a Baroque music lover did, mainly because the whole cultural context has changed. But this does not prevent today's music lover from enjoying the formal qualities of the Baroque piece—"the waxing and waning of musical tension, the music's melodic and tonal telos and closure, and so on" (p. 112).

Now why do, or should, we listen to music—for the pleasure it gives or for its own sake? Is music a means to an end, where the end is pleasure? No, because the pleasure we derive from the experience of music is an integral part of the experience itself. Davies says that not all musical works are pleasurable. However he agrees with R.A. Sharpe that it is somewhat odd to hold that we are driven to music by the expectation of pleasure. The musical experience is richer than this. We may say it is a human, or life enhancing, experience; it can change one's way of thinking or looking at the world. It can be a moment of self-realization.

Much emphasis in the philosophy of art during the past two centuries has been on the aesthetic experience of the artwork or what makes the artwork an aesthetic object. This emphasis reveals, it seems to me, either some kind of prejudice or an oversight or a neglect of the experience of the artwork *qua* art. What *Art and Experience* does is to direct our attention to the concept of art. Could it be that the starting point in our study of aesthetic appreciation and evaluation should be a clarification of the concept of art not as an aesthetic concept but as an *artistic category*?

Michel H. Mitias  
Kuwait University  
and Millsaps College

**Ramesh Chandra Dash, *The Renegade* and *The Golden Deer*, Bhubaneswar: The Renegade Publications.**

**Bees' Overview of Man**

In the postmodernist era classification of texts as creative and critical has been eroded as have been all the binary relationship in man's thought process. The present works, the first in prose and the second in verse are striking specimens in the postmodernist genre.

In the *The Renegade* the protagonist is a country boy, who rises to positions of power from the background of rural innocence - to sacrifice the very virtues he had held once dear. Lured by the glitz and glitters of civil service, he incurs friendship that ultimately proves fatal for him as depicting the rotten condition of the Indian civil service. But when an incisive reader turns the pages, he deciphers the ideology the author seeks to battle with and the comment he makes on human beings as a whole. The anger of the protagonist with which he closes the book is eloquent of the will to struggle than what despair would have led us to conclude. The author grapples with the erosion of values, especially traditional values that had at least ensured a sort of predictable and fair disposition from his fellow human beings as against the changed scenario in the aftermath of freedom, where man is pitted against his very representative and scornfully calls him politician - the potential social redeemer playing foul with him left and right and he is undone; and the instrument of the State is utilized more to cause harassment than usher in him hope of progress, so that one who sticks to traditional value systems is either made to succumb or perish: honesty being talked of in terms of relativity. Man is a renegade on earth - ineluctably, as it were. And here the will to be free is pitted against the mechanism of control and dominance already set for him. If the bondage of childhood is indispensable against man's incipient fragility so also the birth of freewill is ineluctable. The young protagonist seeks to surmount the sphere of maternal affection in the wake of adolescence - seeks to enjoy operatic shows - and pays deaf ears to the words of his mothers that seeks to provide an antidote to his ardor for art. But she fails to counter him and sits speechless: "... the mother perhaps sensing that the son had slipped into the seraglio of individuation and the son, as it were presentient that too much of externality might dislodge him from his new settlement." Puberty makes every man a renegade according to the author and turns him purposeless, even for a while. Here beauty of the fair sex is the devil. Arrayed against a group of young girls are a group of young boys - both to enter upon a song contest, where the young protagonist, the leader of the male team, undergoes a Freudian slip when the girls comes out of their cabin into the hall, "Mr. Gopalkrishna is completely captivated at the approaching caravan of beauties. .... The contest had not then started but the warrior was feeling heavily battle-scarred." An obedient and only son - still bathing in filial affection of parents - yet takes a vow before a bridal altar to marry a general if she is alive when he comes of age. And fate contrives so, when a negotiation takes him to her and he does not change his mind, even if the whole world goes against him. Love is fulfilled in marriage runs everyone's idea.

But the young man picks up friendship with a young man - both being married - become as thick as thieves as soon as they meet. Madan, as the friend goes, is licentious knows the other, yet he is unable to part from him. There is a will to change him when he smells omens from a bad friendship, for example when he counters a dissuading wife with, "Do you think, darling, my distance from him would debar him from doing his wont?" But he is gradually overpowered by the so-called friend's motivation. The words of Madan are redolent of the dialogues between Mephistopheles and Faust. By trying to paint a grotesque picture of the civil service, where negligence is rewarded and honesty and sincerity are recoiling, Madan counters the other's traditional version that duty is divine, with, "Your sense of duty will make a donkey of you: other's duties will be dumped upon you too!" And Gopalkrishna ultimately succumbs to the extent when he lands in a private brothel with Madan and is ineluctably dragged towards the denouement. The lover is a renegade again. There must be deeper psychological theory the author has in his mind in presenting a bad friend as the alter ego in opposition to the beloved-turned wife.

At last Madan betrays and sends irreparable grief and shock to the other's heart. But the author never inculcates despair in the protagonist about the fallibility or culpability or incorrigible delinquency of a human

creature. There is anger at what goes astray; there is the will to revenge no matter what that will carry one to and not resignation or helplessness or stoic withdrawal from life to lament - pine away and perish.

But at every stage of the apparent slip, when a reader places himself in the position of the protagonist, he would irresistibly find himself doing or saying the same thing as does or speaks the protagonist. *The Renegade* becomes a veritable burlesque on man, as if deviation from the set path is his fate, if he is free to choose as he does.

As Nietzsche ordains Zarathustra to survey human affairs from above or Guenter Grass, a pick of rats, so does Ramesh Chandra Dash ordains a swarm of bees in his *The Golden Deer* – ‘honey poets’ he calls them – to survey man-woman relationship on this earth. In fact a Superman is a figment of the imagination, and if there is any, His view of man is most likely to be one-sided: so also rats – of whatever denomination – they have no right to survey humans, without thinking for a while how to pilfer what humans are keenly preservative about. But this is certainly different in case of bees that pass on what is conducive to life and vitality of mankind – not only in the ingredient of life but also through their organization – a hive of bees being the first example of a republic. The ‘honey poets’ instinctually perceives the scenario behind the Love – Marriage – Divorce – of a young couple and build up an intellectual edifice on man-woman relationship – to conclude in fine that woman is not the human female and man is condemned to cross with woman, that is a different species altogether – to end with an outrageous conclusion that man is a cross breed.

In one of our great myths the Lord and His Consort are born in human form to kill the demon king and reorder religion on earth. By a stroke of bad luck they are banished from their kingdom and made to lead the life of saints, though they lived together. The demon king sets a golden deer in their trail, and unable to see through the illusion, the Lord chases the golden deer and the demon abducts His Consort by taking advantage of His absence. So Dash depicts the golden deer as the objectified illusion of the repressed sexual impulses of a man and woman who stay together but “do not click”. Taking a thread from this part of the epic, Dash builds up a profound psychological, anthropological and social edifice in his intertext *The Golden Deer*.

The ‘honey poets’ proceed with a profound scorn for extreme rationalism into which mankind has been ineluctably sucked, by a remark, “Every child of logic is but a bastard.” There is the same Rousseau-type eulogy of the primitive equality and fraternity between humans *inter se*, when the human female was truly eternal feminine. As in every other species estrus was periodical in woman and there was no barrier to how many males joined a female in the process of reproduction. But with the disappearance of estrus from the human female, a new species called woman came into being, continuous sexual receptivity becoming the *sine qua non* of femininity. This was bound to ordain far-reaching changes in human life. As in other notable species, there is no difference between the outward shapes of a male and female, except in the organ for functional differentiation, so was woman before the disappearance of estrus, but with disappearance of estrus woman underwent profound changes in her organism – she became an idol of beauty and an object of enjoyment. The growth of artificial organizations became indispensable to safeguard her from unpredictable and erratic infiltration of fellowmen. The concept of brotherhood became uterine and reproduction became a process of pleasure in man. All those artificial growth proved spurious for man and put fetters on mankind. To the ‘honey poets’ a man is not that indispensable to woman as a woman is for man, because it is man who tried to make himself indispensable to her – outwardly to safeguard her fragility, but inwardly he felt pitted against his own anticipations about her. The citadel of all such artificialities called society is a manacle that restricts man more than insinuates anything good in him. To the ‘honey poets’ most problems of men and woman lies in the willful restraint they undergo being together with a woman they cannot avail. This distorts reason and martyrs man under the temptations of passion. Their natural impulses are atrophied, and with increasing liberation of woman in the days to come, man is simply to be increasingly robotized. The ‘honey poets’ perceive beauty of woman as the devil that erodes the so-called rational stuff in man and accounts for many of his slips and falls. “Woman is the blight of man” they pronounce and prove in a very artistic way,

“Suffer a torture really he greater,  
Who keenly in him posting a stunner



Fails to express or smoother  
And feeling deterred for either  
Flounder in the fallout of infatuation.”

It is because man is a cross breed there is nothing certain or predictable about him, combines as he in his veins traits imperceptible. The genes, the chromosomes and the nucleus together constitute – to use a famous phrase of Churchill’s, “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” That is why the ancients never expected anything prodigious or great from a human creature unless he was a cross between a god and a woman.

**Sanjay Sarangi**

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